



SHILAP Revista de Lepidopterología

ISSN: 0300-5267

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Sociedad Hispano-Luso-Americana de
Lepidopterología
España

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SHILAP Revista de Lepidopterología, vol. 33, núm. 130, junio, 2005, pp. 235-238

Sociedad Hispano-Luso-Americana de Lepidopterología

Madrid, España

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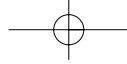
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The correct identity of three Pyralidae moths from the Maltese Islands (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae)

P. Sammut

Abstract

Three Pyralidae species, *Arenipses sabella* (Hampson, 1901), *Euclasta splendidalis* (Herrich-Schäffer, 1848) and *Herpetogramma aegrotalis* (Zeller, 1852) have been recorded in error from Malta. These records are herein rectified and *Pseudarenipses insularum* Speidel & Schmitz, 1991, *Euclasta varii* (Popescu-Gorj & Constantinescu, 1973) and *Herpetogramma licarsisalis* (Walker, 1859) are instead recorded from the Maltese Islands. Some additional data on the distribution and biology of the species is included.

KEY WORDS: Lepidoptera, Pyraloidea, Pyralidae, *Herpetogramma licarsisalis*, *Pseudarenipses insularum*, *Euclasta varii*, Malta.

La correcta identidad de tres Pyralidae de Malta (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae)

Resumen

Tres especies de Pyralidae, *Arenipses sabella* (Hampson, 1901), *Euclasta splendidalis* (Herrich-Schäffer, 1848) y *Herpetogramma aegrotalis* (Zeller, 1852) han sido citados por error de Malta. Estas citas se rectifican aquí y *Pseudarenipses insularum* Speidel & Schmitz, 1991, *Euclasta varii* (Popescu-Gorj & Constantinescu, 1973) y *Herpetogramma licarsisalis* (Walker, 1859) son en su lugar citadas de Malta. De las especies, se incluyen algunos datos adicionales sobre su distribución y biología de las especies.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lepidoptera, Pyralidae, *Herpetogramma licarsisalis*, *Pseudarenipses insularum*, *Euclasta varii*, Malta.

Introduction

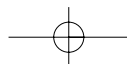
Due to an error of mis-interpretation of the illustrations in GOATER (1986) by the present author, *Arenipses sabella* (Hampson) and *Herpetogramma aegrotalis* (Zeller) were recorded from the Maltese Islands (SAMMUT, 2000; 2003). *Euclasta splendidalis* (Herrich-Schäffer) has also been recorded from the Maltese Islands in error by VALLETTA (1984). The latter mistake was perpetuated by other authors (SAMMUT 1984, 2000; SPIEDEL 1996).

Pyralidae – Galleriinae

Pseudoarenipses insularum Speidel & Schmitz, 1991

Pseudarenipses insularum Speidel & Schmitz, 1991. *Bonn. Zool. Beitr.*, **42**(2): 219, fig. 1-5.

Arenipses sabella (Hampson, 1901), SAMMUT, 2003: 49 [mis-identification]



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Material examined:

MALTA: 1 ♀, Mosta, 28-VIII-2003, leg. J. Caruana; 1 ♀, Rabat, 14-IX-2003, leg. P. Sammut; 2 ♀, Naxxar, 14-X-2003, leg. A. Seguna at light; 1 ♀, Mdina, 25-VI-2004, leg. A. Catania at light; 1 ♂, 1 ♀, Naxxar, 1-X-2004, leg. A. Seguna at light.

This species has been recorded and figured by SAMMUT (2003) in error to *Arenipses sabella* (Hampson). Following a brief correspondence with Barry Goater it was obvious that the species recorded from Malta was *Pseudoarenipses insularum*.

Pseudoarenipses insularum has been recorded from various parts of the Canary Islands and from Almeria in South Spain (SPEIDEL & SCHMITZ, 1991). It is possible that this species was introduced into the Maltese Islands with palm trees (*Phoenix canariensis* Hort. ex Chabaud and *Phoenix dactylifera* L.) imported from Spain and Egypt and which are being used in landscaping and planted in public and private gardens throughout the Maltese Islands.

The female figured by SAMMUT (2003) laid a small number of eggs in captivity, of which, a few hatched and fed on dry, commercially bought dates. Larvae fed both on the succulent pulp as well as on the hard 'stone' for about 15 months. Eventually three larvae reached the pupal stage but failed to enclose.

Pyralidae – Pyraustinae

Euclasta varii (Popescu-Gorj & Constantinescu, 1973)

Euclasta varii Popescu-Gorj & Constantinescu, 1973. *Rev. Romm. Biol.(Zool)* **18**(6): 393, fig. d.

Euclasta splendidalis H.S. - VALLETTA, 1984: 47 [mis-identification]

Euclasta splendidalis Herrich-Schäffer, 1848 - SAMMUT, 1984: 33 [mis-identification]

Euclasta splendidalis (Herrich-Schäffer, 1848) - SPEIDEL, 1996: 194 [mis-identification]

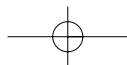
Euclasta splendidalis (Herrich-Schäffer, 1848) - SAMMUT, 2000: 120 [mis-identification]

Material examined:

MALTA: 1 ♂, Rabat, 30-V-1983, leg. P. Sammut; 2 ♀ ♀, Dingli Cliffs, 22-VI-1989, leg. A. Catania; 1 ♂, Dingli Cliffs, 31-VII-1989, leg. A. Catania; 2 ♂ ♂, Dingli Cliffs, 26-VI-1990, leg. A. Catania; 1 ♀, Pembroke, 23-X-1990, leg. A. Catania; 1 ♂, Pembroke, 25-X-1990, leg. A. Catania; 1 ♂, Marfa, 25-VI-1994, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Paradise Bay, 18-V-1997, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Armier, 23-V-1998, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Ghar Lapsi, 15-VI-1999, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Naxxar, 18-X-2000, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Ghar Lapsi, 3-VIII-2001, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Naxxar, 10-VIII-2001, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Rabat, 15-XI-2001, leg. P. Sammut; 1 ♀, Zurrieq, 7-VII-2003, leg. D. Magro; 1 ♀, Hal Far, 21-VII-2003, leg. D. Magro; 1 ♂, Qrendi, San Niklaw, 23-VII-2003, leg. D. Margo; 1 ♂, Bahrija, 23-VII-2003, leg. D. Magro; 1 ♂, Rabat, 27-X-2003, leg. P. Sammut; 1 ♀, Zurrieq, 2-X-2004, leg. D. Magro; 1 ♀, Dwejra, l/o Rabat 13-XI-2004, leg. P. Sammut.

Following correspondence with Dr. Martin Honey regarding the correct identity of *Euclasta splendidalis* which was recorded from Malta, comparison of available *Euclasta* material from Malta with illustrations of both *splendidalis* and *varii* was carried out. All material examined from Malta belongs to *E. varii*. This species was erroneously recorded as *Euclasta splendidalis* H-S., by VALLETTA (1984) from a single specimen collected by himself from Ghar Lapsi on October 9, 1974. In all probability he compared this specimen with material in the British Museum (Natural History) on one of his frequent visits to London. Also, most likely, at the same museum at the time he compared his specimen, there was no material belonging to *E. varii* given that this taxon had only been recently established. This same mistake was repeated by SAMMUT (2000) and others such as (SPEIDEL, 1996). The present author did not have the possibility to study the material in Valletta's collection but it is presumed that it is also incorrectly determined.

Euclasta varii is known from Spain and the Balearic Islands (Dr. Honey *pers. comm.*) and now from the Maltese Islands where it appears to be well established and widely distributed in small colonies. It appears that the species is double brooded from May till early August and again during Septem-



THE CORRECT IDENTITY OF THREE PYRALIDAE MOTHS FROM THE MALTESE ISLANDS

ber and October. The species is easily attracted to light and appears to prefer open garigue. The local larval hostplant is not known.

Pyralidae – Pyraustinae

Herpetogramma licarsisalis (Walker, 1859)

Botys licarsisalis Walker, 1859: *Cat. Lep.* **18**: 685.

Herpetogramma aegrotalis (Zeller, 1852) - SAMMUT, 2000: 118 [mis-identification]

Material examined:

MALTA: 1 ♂, Naxxar, 14-X-1998, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Naxxar, 27-X-1998, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Naxxar, 28-X-1998, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Naxxar, 3-XI-1998, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Naxxar, 20-XI-1998, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Rabat, 6-X-2001, leg. P. Sammut; 1 ♀, Qrendi, San Niklaw, 21-X-2003, leg. D. Magro; 1 ♂, Dwejra, l/o Rabat, 23-X-2003, leg. P. Sammut; 1 ♂, Dwejra, l/o Rabat 23-X-2003, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Rabat, 25-X-2003, leg. P. Sammut; 1 ♀, Qrendi, San Niklaw, 29-X-2003, leg. D. Magro; 1 ♀, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 6-XI-2003, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, 17-XI-2003, leg. A. Catania; 1 ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 26-XI-2003, leg. A. Seguna; 2 ♂ ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 17-IX-2004, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Zebbug, 28-IX-2004, leg. A. Catania; 1 ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 13-X-2004, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 18-X-2004, leg. A. Seguna; 2 ♂ ♂, Zebbug, 18-X-2004, leg. A. Catania; 1 ♂, Dwejra, l/o Rabat, 20-X-2004, leg. P. Sammut; 1 ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 22-X-2004, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Dwejra, l/o Rabat, 22-X-2004, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 26-X-2004, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♀, Zebbug, 29-X-2004, leg. A. Catania; 2 ♂ ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 2-XI-2004 leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Kirkop, 4-XI-2004, leg. D. Magro; 1 ♂, Qrendi, Maqluba, 4-XI-2004, leg. D. Magro; 1 ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 5-XI-2004, leg. A. Seguna; 1 ♂, Rabat, 10-XI-2004, leg. P. Sammut; 1 ♂, Rabat, 31-X-2004, leg. P. Sammut; 1 ♂, Naxxar, Tas-Saghjtar, 5-XII-2004, leg. A. Seguna.

Due to an error of mis-interpretation of the illustrations in GOATER (1986), this species was recorded and figured erroneously by the present author as *Herpetogramma aegrotalis* (Zeller, 1852) (SAMMUT, 2000). Following correspondence with Dr. Martin Honey regarding the correct identity of the specimens in the author's collection, a few of these were sent to Dr. Antonio Vives for further study. Genitalia preparations confirmed the previous error and at the same time confirmed that the species was actually *Herpetogramma licarsisalis* (Walker, 1859).

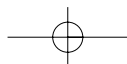
Herpetogramma licarsisalis (Walker) is a recent introduction in the Maltese Islands. The earliest records date back only to 1989 and these coincide with dates of recordings for the other European countries. It appears to be already well established and the times of flight (October to December) suggests that the species is univoltine.

According to the electronic version of the Checklist of the Lepidoptera of Europe, *Herpetogramma licarsisalis* is known from Portugal, Madeira and Cyprus. GOATER & KNILL JONES (1999) record the species from extensive populations from South Spain while KING (1999) recorded it from Catalonia in North Spain. In the year 2000 it was recorded from Sweden (SVENSON, 2003). The species is widely distributed in Japan, Hawaii, South East Asia, the Pacific islands, Northern Australia, New Zealand (WILLOUGHBY & BARNS, 2002).

The larva is known to feed on a wide range of monocotyledonous plants and cereals. It is considered an important pest of pastures and turf grass in the tropics. Amongst the larval host plant species listed by GRANT (1982), Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon* (L.) Pers.) and perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.) are very common and widely distributed in the Maltese Islands. However, to date, no early stages or damage to cereal crops have been locally recorded.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Dr. Antonio Vives, Mr. Barry Goater and Dr. Martin Honey for



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their help in the identification of the three species, to Dr. David Mifsud for his useful suggestions and to my colleagues Mr. Aldo Catania, Mr. Anthony Seguna, Mr. Denis Magro and M. Jonathan Agius for making their collection available for study. To Dr. Antonio Vives for the Spanish abstract.

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(Recibido para publicación / Received for publication 16-IV-2005)
(Revisado y aceptado / Revised and accepted 6-V-2005)