
THE SNAIL-KILLING FLY *PHORBELLIA CINERELLA* (FALLEN) IN MALTA.

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The Sciomyzidae is a family of flies whose larvae are predatory on terrestrial and aquatic molluscs. There are 142 species known from the Western Palaearctic and the Mediterranean region. *Pherbellia* Robineau-Desvoidy is the genus with the highest number of species and *P. cinerella* (Fallen) is the commonest and most widespread species in the Palaearctic. It is here recorded for the first time from Malta and so far it is the only representative of the family locally. Identification was based on Knutson et al (1965).

Pherbellia cinerella (Fallen 1820)

Material examined: 1 ♀, Siggiewi, Fawwara, 18.iii.1992, M.J. Ebejer; 1 ♂, Ghadira 17.iv.1992, M.J. Ebejer.

Bratt et al (1969) give a detailed account of the biology of the genus and the diverse ecological conditions under which the species occurs. Interestingly, the two records from Malta reflect this. Fawwara is relatively dry and the specimen was taken from vegetation on stony ground at the foot of the vertical rockface; Ghadira on the other hand may be described as dune with saltmarsh; here the specimen was taken behind the pool, from the low vegetation among the reeds. This species breeds continuously during the warmer months and up to seven generations in a year have been recorded.

P. cinerella is known from most of the Mediterranean countries including Sicily and Tunisia, and in Israel (Knutson 1983) it has also been found in semidesert localities.

The mollusc fauna of Malta is comparatively rich and many snail populations are large. The mollusc genera from which this species has been reared are many but some at least do occur on Malta (*Helix*, *Helicella* and *Lymnaea*). The apparent scarcity of the Sciomyzidae therefore, cannot be explained. Among material reared from snails there were Phoridae and Sarcophagidae but no Sciomyzidae. It remains possible that other widespread species of this family of flies may yet turn up.

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