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## THE CHEQUERED BEETLES (COLEOPTERA: CLERIDAE) OF THE MALTESE ISLANDS (CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN)

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### ABSTRACT

The Cleridae of the Maltese Islands are reviewed. Of the six Maltese species, *Tillus unifasciatus*, can be considered as a doubtful record, while two species, *Denops albofasciatus* and *Opilo domesticus*, are here recorded for the first time. Information on global distribution and additional notes are given for each species.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Cleridae are a moderate-sized family of about 150 genera and 4,000 species worldwide. Both adults and larvae are generally predatory, especially on wood-boring beetle larvae. The larvae of some species are probably ectoparasitic. Adults of certain species are sometimes found on carrion, where they are usually predators of other insects, but may also feed on the decaying meat. The group is particularly important in tropical and sub-tropical regions where species diversity is high.

Four species have hitherto been recorded in the Maltese Islands. Cameron & Caruana Gatto (1907) listed three species: *Tillus transversalis* Charp. [= *Tillodea transversalis* (Charpentier, 1825)], *Necrobia ruficollis* (Fabricius, 1775) and *Necrobia rufipes* (De Geer, 1775). In a semi-popular article, Lanfranco (1971) mentioned *T. transversalis* on *Cynara cardunculus* L. in late spring or early summer. Valletta, (1979), in an article on the insect pollinators of *Cynara cardunculus*, mentioned a fourth species, *Tillus unifasciatus* Fabr. [= *Tilloidea unifasciata* (Fabricius, 1787)]. Cilia (1989) pointed out that this record possibly refers to *T. transversalis*.

Unless otherwise stated, all material was collected by the author and is deposited in his private collection.

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## SPECIES LIST

*Denops albofasciatus* (Charpentier, 1825)

**Material examined:** MALTA, Ghadira, 16.VII.93, 1 ex., on sandy beach; M'Xlokk, 6.VI.95, 1 ex.

**Distribution.** Recorded from central and southern Europe; Mediterranean basin (Lohse, 1979). Central European citations are based on old records. Present throughout mainland Italy, Sicily and Sardinia (Luigioni, 1929; Porta, 1929).

**Notes.** This is a new record for the Maltese Islands. *D. albofasciatus* is an active predator of bostrychid beetle larvae (Lohse, 1979).

*Tilloidea transversalis* (Charpentier, 1825)

*Tillus transversalis* Charp.; Cameron & Caruana Gatto, 1907.

*Tillus transversalis* Charp.; Lanfranco, 1971.

**Material examined:** MALTA, Tal-Munxar (St. Thomas Bay), 1.VI. 90, 2 exs.; Ghajn Hadid, 23.V.90, 3 exs.; on *Cynara cardunculus*.

**Distribution.** North Africa, southern Europe, and isolated records from central Europe (southern Slovakia) (Lohse, 1979). Present in central and southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica. (Luigioni, 1929; Porta, 1929).

**Notes.** This is a rather common species in the Maltese Islands, frequently found on flowers of the Wild Artichoke, *Cynara cardunculus* L.

*Tilloidea unifasciata* (Fabricius, 1787)

*Tillus unifasciatus* Fabr.; Valletta, 1979.

**Distribution:** Western and southern Europe (Lohse, 1979). Present throughout mainland Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica (Luigioni, 1929; Porta, 1929).

**Notes.** Not found during the present study. *T. unifasciata* is easily distinguished from *T. transversalis*; however, the possibility that Valletta's record is erroneous cannot be excluded.

*Opilo domesticus* (Sturm, 1837)

**Material examined:** MALTA, Kalkara, 1.VIII.93, 1 ex., larva found dead in branches of *Ceratonia siliqua* L.; GOZO, Ramla, 1.X.95, 1 ex., found dead in sand dunes near *Pancreatium maritimum* L.

**Distribution.** Widely distributed in Europe, except northern Europe. Present throughout mainland Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica (Luigioni, 1929; Porta, 1929).

**Notes.** This is a new record for the Maltese Islands. *O. domesticus* is a predator of anobiid beetles and of the cerambycid *Hylotrupes* sp. (Lohse, 1979).

*Necrobia ruficollis* (Fabricius, 1775)

*Necrobia ruficollis* F.; Cameron & Caruana Gatto, 1907.

**Distribution.** Cosmopolitan (Lohse, 1979).

**Notes.** Not found during the present study. Cameron & Caruana Gatto (1907) reported the species as occurring "here and there".

*Necrobia rufipes* (De Geer, 1775)

*Necrobia rufipes* DeGeer; Cameron & Caruana Gatto, 1907.

**Material examined:** MALTA: Zejtun, 15.V.89, 1 ex.; 22.V.89, 1 ex.; 23.VI.89, 2 exs; M'Xlukk, 15.IX.89, 1 ex.; Marsa, 2.XI.93, 1 ex. All specimens found on carrion.

**Distribution.** Cosmopolitan (Lohse, 1979).

**Notes.** *N. rufipes* is a common species found throughout the Maltese Islands.

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