
FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LONGHORN BEETLES (COLEOPTERA: CERAMBYCIDAE) OF THE MALTESE ISLANDS

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ABSTRACT

Six species of cerambycid beetles are recorded for the first time from the Maltese Islands: *Icosium tomentosum*, *Trichoferus griseus*, *Stenopterus rufus*, *Certallum ebulinum*, *Cerambyx carinatus* and *C. velutinus*. For each species information is provided on global distribution and host plant data for larval development. Notes are given on three additional species which to date were only known from single records, and on two introduced species, one of which, *Phoracantha semipunctata*, is recorded for the first time. The latter is associated with eucalyptus trees and has become naturalised in the Maltese Islands.

INTRODUCTION

The study of longhorn beetles has attracted the attention of a number of Maltese naturalists. Faunistic studies were started in 1894 by Dr Alfredo Caruana Gatto. Some years later he co-authored an important work (Cameron & Caruana Gatto, 1907) entitled "A List of the Coleoptera of the Maltese Islands" which still remains the main catalogue of beetles found in the Maltese Islands. In later years, Prof. John Borg and Dr Louis Saliba contributed a number of papers on the biology of, and damage caused by, cerambycid beetles. These works were cited by Schembri and Sama (1986) who also reviewed the local status of the family, listing a total of 22 species. In a short communication, Mifsud (1993) added a new record for the Maltese Islands.

The present work is intended to provide data on further new records of cerambycids and to comment on some locally rare species. Data on introduced species is also provided. This work also brings the total number of cerambycids recorded from the Maltese Islands to a total of 30 species, one of which, *Phoracantha semipunctata*, a native of Australia, has become naturalised. Unless otherwise stated all material is deposited in Mifsud's private collection.

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New records for the Maltese Islands

Icosium tomentosum Lucas, 1854

Material examined: MALTA, Msida (University Buildings), 14.VII.93, 1 ex., Leg. D. Mifsud; attracted to light.

I. tomentosum is known from North Africa, West Mediterranean basin, Italy, Yugoslavia and Greece. *I. tomentosum tomentosum* is a predominantly western Mediterranean subspecies, while *I. tomentosum atticum* was recorded from Yugoslavia, Greece and mainland Italy (Adriatic coast). The species has never been recorded from Sicily. The Maltese specimen is attributed to the nominate subspecies. The larvae are known to develop in trees of the genera *Juniperus*, *Thuja*, *Cupressus* and *Callitris* (Sama, 1988).

Trichoferus griseus (Fabricius, 1792)

Material examined: MALTA, Kalkara, 26.VII.93, 1 ex., Leg. D. Mifsud; found dead near private garden dominated by the carob tree, *Ceratonia siliqua* L.

T. griseus is known from North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula, southern France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Canary Islands. It is also frequently recorded from Asia Minor, Caucasus and Transcaucasia but such records could be erroneous (Sama, 1988). The larvae are known to develop in *Ficus* but development in other host plants is not excluded (Sama, 1988).

Stenopterus rufus (Linné, 1767)

Material examined: MALTA, Wied il-Kbir (Qormi), 22.V.95, 3 exs., Leg. & Coll. M.J. Ebejer.

S. rufus is known from Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, European USSR, Balearic Islands, Asia Minor, Caucasus, Iran and Syria. The larvae develop in dead wood of *Quercus*, *Castanea*, *Robinia*, *Ostrya*, *Pistacia*, *Ulmus*, *Ficus*, *Prunus* and other trees (Sama, 1988).

Certallum ebulinum (Linné, 1767)

Material examined: MALTA, Wied is-Sewda, 23.IV.76, 1 ex., Leg. & Coll. M.J. Ebejer.

C. ebulinum is known from North Africa (Egypt to Morocco), Spain, Portugal, southern France, central-southern Italy, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Caucasus and Syria. Larvae are known to develop in cruciferous plants such as *Erysinum*, *Sisymbrium*, *Psychine* and *Raphanus* (Sama, 1988).

Cerambyx carinatus Küster, 1846

Material examined: MALTA, Balzan, 10.VII.73, 1 ex., 19.VI.94, 1 ex., 24.VI.94, 1 ex., Leg. & Coll. M.J. Ebejer; on pear tree in private garden.

C. carinatus is a predominantly Balkan species, with records from coastal Yugoslavia and Greece. The larvae are known to develop in *Prunus* spp. (Sama, 1988).

Cerambyx velutinus Brullé, 1832

Material examined: MALTA, no other data. 1 ex., specimen from J.G. Children's sale of 1840. In collection of The Natural History Museum, London.

C. velutinus is known from southern Europe and Asia Minor. Larval development occurs in *Quercus* spp. with a preference for *Q. ilex* (Sama, 1988).

Notes on rare species.

The following three longhorn beetles had previously been recorded from single captures in the Maltese Islands. Two of them, *Gracilia minuta* and *Stenidea troberti*, were also listed as 'very rare locally (?)' in the Red Data Book for the Maltese Islands (Cilia, 1989).

Gracilia minuta (Fabricius, 1781)

Material examined: MALTA, Chadwick Lakes, 19.V.90, 1 ex., Leg. D. Mifsud; Marsascala, 22.V.97, 1 ex., Leg. C. Farrugia.

Prior to the above finds, *G. minuta* was recorded from a single specimen taken in 1976 at Buskett (Schembri & Sama, 1986).

Nathrius brevipennis (Mulsant, 1839)

Material examined: MALTA, Kalkara, 16.VII.93, 4 exs., Leg. D. Mifsud; found in dead branches of *Ceratonia siliqua*. GOZO, Victoria, 20.VI.95, 8 exs., Leg. C. Farrugia; reared from dead branches of loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica* Thunb.). Some material has been deposited at The Natural History Museum, London..

N. brevipennis was previously recorded from a single capture from Marsalforn Valley in Gozo (Mifsud, 1993). The Kalkara record constitutes the first record from mainland Malta. The species can be numerous when found, and is probably a recent arrival expanding its range.

Stenidea troberti (Mulsant, 1843)

Material examined: MALTA, Buskett, 6.IV.96, 1 ex., Leg. D. Mifsud; collected by beating maquis vegetation dominated by *Pistacia lentiscus* L.

S. troberti was previously recorded from a single specimen taken in 1976 at the same locality (Schembri & Sama, 1986).

Introduced species in the Maltese Islands

Cordylomera spinicornis (Fabricius, 1775)

Material examined: MALTA, Ghammieri (Marsa), IV.92, 1 ex., Leg. A. Vella.

C. spinicornis, a native of West Africa, was reported from imported wood at Santa Venera (Schembri, 1975). The present record constitutes its second capture from Malta. The species is collected from time to time in different countries where it is transported in wood, but its naturalization has nowhere been confirmed (G. Sama, *pers. comm.*, 1995).

Phoracantha semipunctata (Fabricius, 1775)

Material examined: MALTA, Siggiewi, 24.IX.94, 1 ex., Leg. D. Dandria; attracted to light; Ghammieri (Marsa), 20.X.95, 1 ex., Leg. D. Mifsud; Balzan, VIII.96, 5 exs., Leg. D. Mifsud; attracted to light in human habitation.

P. semipunctata, a native of Australia, is now widely distributed in eucalyptus plantations in many parts of the world. It was introduced into Italy in the 1950s. The present records are the first for this species in the Maltese Islands. Larval damage in *Eucalyptus* trees (the specific host plant of *P. semipunctata*) was observed locally and the species has already become naturalised, as has happened in other parts of the world where it was introduced..

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One of us (D.M.) is particularly grateful to a number of experts namely Dr Gianfranco Sama of Cesena, Italy and Dr Brian Levey of the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff for identifying and confirming identifications of some of the above species. Thanks are also due to Dr Martin Ebejer, Mr David Dandria, Mr Charles Farrugia and Mr Anthony Vella, who have provided material for this study.

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(Received 29th April 1997; accepted 30th May 1997)

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