

***ARENIPSES SABELLA* (HAMPSON, 1901) AND *MYELOIS CIRCUMVOLUTA* (FOURCROY, 1785) (INSECTA: LEPIDOPTERA: PYRALIDAE) NEW TO THE LEPIDOPTEROFAUNA OF THE MALTESE ISLANDS.**

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ABSTRACT

The pyralid moths *Myelois circumvoluta* and *Arenipses sabella* are here recorded for the first time for the Maltese Islands. Notes on the biology of the larvae and habits of the adults are included.

INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of *Il-Lepidoptera* (Sammut 2000), a number of lepidopterous insects belonging to different families have been found in the Maltese Islands. Of these, some records have been or are being published (e.g. Sammut, 2003; Sammut *et al.*, 2003; Mifsud *et al.*, 2003; present work). From the large family Pyralidae, a single female specimen of *Arenopsis sabella* (Hampson, 1901) and a male specimen of *Myelois circumvoluta* (Fourcroy, 1785) were recorded at light from Rabat by the author. The specimens are in the author's collection.

SPECIES-LIST

Family: Pyralidae
Sub-Family: Galleriinae

Arenipses sabella (Hampson, 1901)

Material Examined: MALTA (1♀), Rabat 14. ix. 2003, at light, leg. P. Sammut. (Fig. 1)

This North African species is practically unknown in Europe (Speidel, 1996). It has been recorded from the British Isles on only two occasions: a female bred from a larva found on May 3, 1917 feeding on dates and another female captured at Canterbury, also believed to have come from imported dates (Goater, 1986). *Arenipses sabella*, a native of North Africa and the Middle East, is a serious pest of the date palm, attacking both the inflorescence and the fruit.

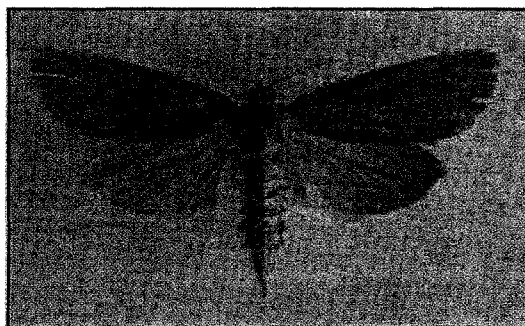


Fig. 1 *Arenipses sabella*, ♀

The eggs are white and laid in small masses, either on the mature fruit or on the inflorescence. When they hatch, the larvae feed on the flowers and developing fruits. The moth produces two broods and is on the wing during May-June and again during September. Eggs produced by the second brood hibernate as small larvae.

I propose the Maltese name "Bahrija Zghira tat-Tamal" after the foodplant of the larva.

Sub-Family: Phycitinae

Myelois circumvoluta (Fourcroy, 1785)

Material Examined: MALTA (1♂), Rabat 30. vi. 2002, at light, leg. P. Sammut. (Fig. 2)

The species is known from practically all Europe, including European Russia and Turkey (Speidel, 1996). The larva is known to feed on Compositae such as *Carduus*, *Cirsium* and *Onopordon*, preferring the larger plants (Beirne, 1954; Parenti, 2000). Locally the larval food plant has not been identified. It feeds in late summer on the heads of thistles,

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boring its way to the pith of the stem and producing extensive galleries. In spring, after hibernation, it cuts an exit hole in the dry stem and pupates in a delicate cocoon near the hole (Goater, 1986).

The moth is single brooded and flies in July. By day it rests with the wings tightly wrapped round the body, after the manner of footmans of the genus *Lithosia* (Lepidoptera, Arctiidae). It is occasionally attracted to light.

I propose the Maltese name “Ermellin tax-Xewk” after its English equivalent “Thistle Ermine”.

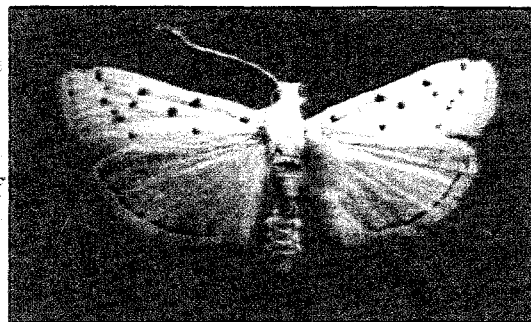


Fig. 2 *Myelois circumvoluta*, ♂

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