

Arctia villica (Linnaeus, 1758), a new Arctiidae for the Maltese Islands (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae)

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Abstract

Both the genus *Arctia* Schrank, 1802 and *Arctia villica* (Linnaeus, 1758) are recorded for the first time from the Maltese Islands. Notes on the distribution, habits of the adult and larval host plant are included. A Maltese name is proposed for this new record.

KEY WORDS: Lepidoptera, Arctiidae, *Arctia villica*, new record, Malta.

Arctia villica (Linnaeus, 1758), nuevo Arctiidae para Malta
(Lepidoptera: Arctiidae)

Resumen

El género *Arctia* Schrank, 1802 y también *Arctia villica* (Linnaeus, 1758) se cita por la primera vez para Malta. Se incluyen datos sobre su distribución, hábitat del adulto y la planta nutricia de la larva. Se propone un nombre maltés para esta nueva cita.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lepidoptera, Arctiidae, *Arctia villica*, nueva cita, Malta.

Introduction

The Arctiidae is one of the largest families with approximately 11,000 species worldwide (WATSON & GOODGER, 1986). In Europe the family comprises 107 species so far (FIBIGER & LAFONTAINE, 2004) and on the Maltese Islands, seven species have been recorded to date (SAMMUT, 2000). In Europe, the genus *Arctia* is represented by six species. *Arctia villica* (Linnaeus, 1758) has been recorded from Malta by MATHEW (1898) and BAINBRIGGE-FLETCHER (1904-05) in the past but these records have always been regarded as incorrect or doubtful for Malta (SAMMUT, 2000), while VALLETTA (1973) includes the species in an appendix of doubtful records. The records of the past authors have never been confirmed.

Material examined

MALTA: 1 ♂, Zabbar, 28-IV-2008, leg. J. & S. Agius (in coll. Agius).

This species is known from most of Europe, North Africa, Urals, Caucasus, Asia Minor, Kurdistan and Iran (de FREINA & WITT, 1987). The local larval host plant has not been identified yet, but in other countries it is known to feed on *Taraxacum*, *Plantago*, *Achillea*, *Lamium*, *Urtica*, *Centaurea*, and *Fragaria* (de FREINA & WITT, 1987). On the Maltese Islands three species of *Taraxacum*, seven species of *Plantago* and eight species of *Urtica* have been identified, most of which are common and widespread (WEBER & KRENDZIOR, 2006). The specimen was collected at a light trap using a

250W mixed UV and MV light from the author's residence which is partly surrounded by cultivated fields and disturbed sites. On the continent, this species is known to be single brooded and flies in May and June (SKINNER, 1998).

Both genus and species are new to the lepidopterofauna of the Maltese Islands. I propose the Maltese name "Arkja lewn il-Krema", after the cream coloured patches on its forewings.



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