

Pyralestes ragusai Turati, 1922 new to the lepidopterofauna of the Maltese Islands (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae)

J. Agius, A. Seguna & F. Slamka

Abstract

Pyralestes ragusai Turati, 1922, similarly as the genus *Pyralestes* Turati, 1922 is recorded for the first time from the Maltese Islands and, after a long time, also from Sicily. Male and female genitalia are described and figured, notes on the adult habitat are included, and a Maltese name of this species is proposed.

KEY WORDS: Lepidoptera, Pyralidae, *Pyralestes ragusai*, Malta, Sicily.

Pyralestes ragusai Turati 1922, nueva para la lepidopterofauna de Malta
(Lepidoptera: Pyralidae)

Resumen

Se cita por primera vez para Malta a *Pyralestes ragusai* Turati, 1922, así como el género *Pyralestes* Turati, 1922 y, después de mucho tiempo, también para Sicilia. Se describe e ilustra por primera vez la genitalia del macho y de la hembra, se incluyen notas sobre el hábitat del adulto y se propone un nuevo nombre maltes para la especie.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lepidoptera, Pyralidae, *Pyralestes ragusai*, Malta, Sicilia.

Introduction

Pyralestes ragusai has been described by Turati from Italy (Sicily, Palermo, Capo Gallo) and it was known originally by a single female holotype which was destroyed by the larvae of dermestid beetles whilst still in the collection of Turati. The Turati collection was later taken over by Hartig where it resided until the type material from all of Hartig's collection was eventually passed on to BMNH London and the remaining collection to the Turin Museum. In the BMNH London, all that is left of the Turati holotype is the pin carrying the labels (M. Shaffer, letter comm.). Females from the Maltese Islands are rather similar to Turati's description of *Pyralestes ragusai*, in spite of the poor quality black and white figures depicted by Turati. The male and the genitalia of both sexes have been described here for the first time. Genitalia were prepared and photographed by F. Slamka. During the last preparations of this manuscript the authors received figures of unknown Sicilian Pyralids from Steffen Schellhorn (Germany). These 3 females and 2 males were identified as *P. ragusai* (det. F. Slamka).

The Maltese name "Pyralestes ta' Ragusa" is proposed.

Material

SICILY: 2 ♂♂ and 3 ♀♀, Italy, Sicily, San Giorgio near Patti, 27-VII-2005 - 10-VIII-2005 at light (leg. & coll. Steffen Schellhorn).

MALTA: 2 ♂♂, Zurrieq, 4-IX-2001; 1 ♀, the same locality, 20-IX-2003; 3 ♀♀, the same locality, 2-IX-2004; 5 ♀♀, the same locality, 8-VIII-2007, all leg. J. & S. Agius, coll. Agius; 7 ♀♀, 1 ♂, the same locality, 31-VIII-2007, leg. J. & S. Agius and M. Zurgani, coll. Agius, 1 ♂, Gudja, 1-IX-2007, 1 ♀ Malta, Zurrieq, 28-VIII-2007, all leg. J. & S. Agius, coll. S. Agius, 1 ♀, Malta, Qtendi, Maquba, 9-IX-2007, leg. D. Magra, coll. P. Sammut.

Characteristics of adult

Male specimens (fig. 1) are normally smaller than females, with the wingspan of 23-25 mm, the females (fig. 2) have the wingspan of 27-29 mm. Antennae are bipectinate in male and filiform in female. Both sexes are found in the following three different forms usually: reddish/brown, light greyish-green and dark greyish-green. This last colour form is the rarest whilst the reddish/brown form is the commonest. External characters of the "reddish/brown" female more or less agree with the Turati's description: "Wingspan: Female: 28,5 mm. Forewings concolorous pink coloured, black discal spot developed, antemedian line black, the black postmedian line slightly dentate, terminal line slightly darker than ground colour, fringes pink. Hindwings greyish-pink with discal spot, fringes pink. Head, antennae, thorax, legs and abdomen are pink."

Description of male and female genitalia

Male (examined 1 ♂): Malta, Gudja, G. P. F. Slamka (fig. 3).

The genitalia are rather similar to *Actenia*-group - uncus rounded, fine hairy, gnathos strong distinctly hooked, valva without nodules, juxta oval; aedeagus very long, slender and cornutus well developed, long and clearly very slender.

Female (examined 2 ♀♀): Malta, Zurrieq, G. P. F. Slamka (fig. 4); Malta, Qtendi, Maquba, G. P. F. Slamka (not figured).

The same as male, the genitalia are similar to *Actenia*-group - Apophyses anteriores and posteriores relatively short, ostium short, well sclerotised, ductus bursae long, slender, at bursa copulatrix more sclerotised and curved, bursa copulatrix relatively small, without signum.

Bionomics and adult habitat

The larva is not yet described and the larval host plant is unknown. Several attempts to breed this species by J. Agius and A. Seguna were unsuccessful presumably due to the lack of giving the right food plant. The adults come freely to light and have been recorded between July and October. Thus it is presumed that the species is single brooded. The species has been collected mostly on cultivated fields.

Distribution

So far, this species is only known from the Malta and Sicily (Italy).

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Mr. Michael Shaffer (British Museum Natural History), London and Dr. Wolfgang Speidel (Museum Witt, Munich), for their valuable contributions and also to Prof. Zdeněk Laštůvka (Agronomic faculty, Brno, Czech republic) for his suggestions to the manuscript and to Dr. Antonio Vives for the Spanish abstract. We are also grateful to Mr. John J. Borg, curator of the National Museum of Natural History, Mdina (Malta) for the Mdina records, to Mr. A. Catania of Zebbug (Malta), Mr. D. Magro of Qrendi & Mr. P. Sammut of Rabat (Malta) and finally to Mr. Steffen Schellhorn (Germany) for making their material available for study.

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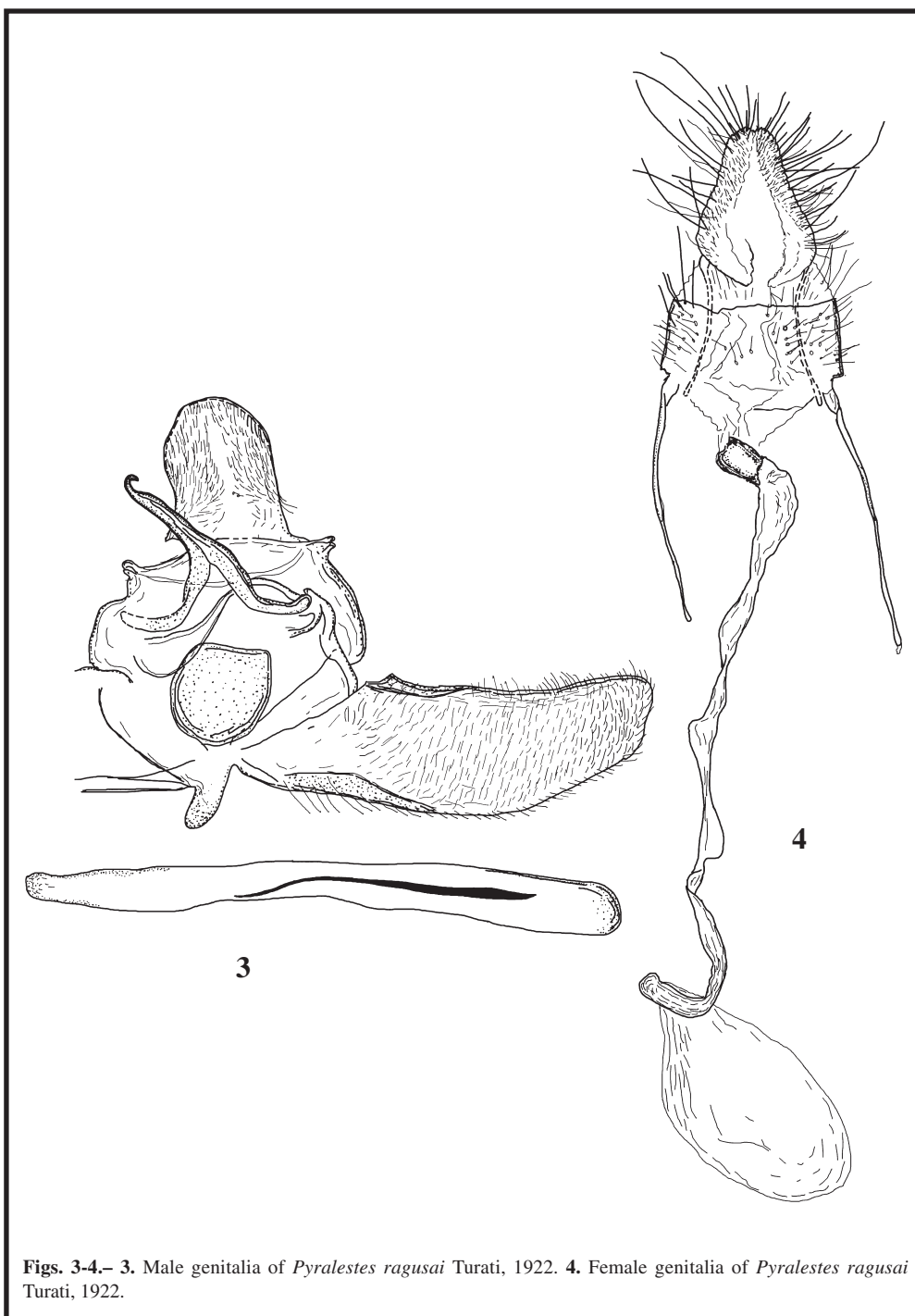
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(Recibido para publicación / Received for publication 16-VIII-2008)
(Revisado y aceptado / Revised and accepted 10-IX-2008)





Figs. 3-4.— 3. Male genitalia of *Pyralestes ragusai* Turati, 1922. 4. Female genitalia of *Pyralestes ragusai* Turati, 1922.