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avives@orange.es

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Agius, J.

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Mythimna umbriger (Saalmüller, 1891) new to the Maltese Islands (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae)

J. Agius

Abstract

Mythimna umbriger (Saalmüller, 1891) is reported for the first time from the Maltese Islands. Distribution and habits of the adult are included. A Maltese name is proposed for this new record.

KEY WORDS: Lepidoptera, Noctuidae, *Mythimna umbriger*, Malta.

Mythimna umbriger (Saalmüller, 1891) nueva para Malta
(Lepidoptera: Noctuidae)

Resumen

Mythimna umbriger (Saalmüller, 1891) se menciona por primera vez para Malta. Se incluye la distribución y hábitat del adulto. Se propone un nombre maltés para este nuevo registro.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lepidoptera, Noctuidae, *Mythimna umbriger*, Malta.

Introduction

The genus *Mythimna* Ochsenheimer, 1816 has a worldwide distribution as it spans from the northernmost parts of Canada into Northern, Central and South America, the Palearctic, Africa, Asia and straight to Australia. There are around 270 species worldwide, 25 of which have been recorded in Europe (HACKER *et al.*, 2002). In Malta seven species have been recorded so far. Some species such as *Mythimna unipuncta* (Haworth, 1809) and *Mythimna languida* (Walker, 1858) breed locally whilst other species such as *Mythimna vitellina* (Hübner, [1808]) are pure migrants and do not breed in Malta but migrate from North Africa when the season is right, and the southern winds are favourable. *Mythimna umbriger* (Saalmüller, 1891) can be easily separated from other *Mythimna* species found in Malta by the black abdominal coremata and the snow-white shine on the male's hindwings. Females hindwings have less shine and can be smoky grey with dark venation instead of white.

Material

MALTA: Haż-Żebbuġ, Wied Qirda, 17 ♂♂, 25-IV-2020, 26-IV-2020, 15-VII-2020, 13-VIII-2020, 20-VIII-2020, 04-XI-2020 at light, leg. J. Agius. (Fig. 1).

Distribution

Mythimna umbriger (Saalmüller, 1891) is an Afrotropical species which was first described in

Madagascar but can be found from Morocco, throughout Africa and has even been recorded in SW Arabia. In Europe, it is only found on the southern parts of Spain and Greece, and in 2012 it was discovered in nearby Sicily (CABELLA & MAIOGLIO, 2013).

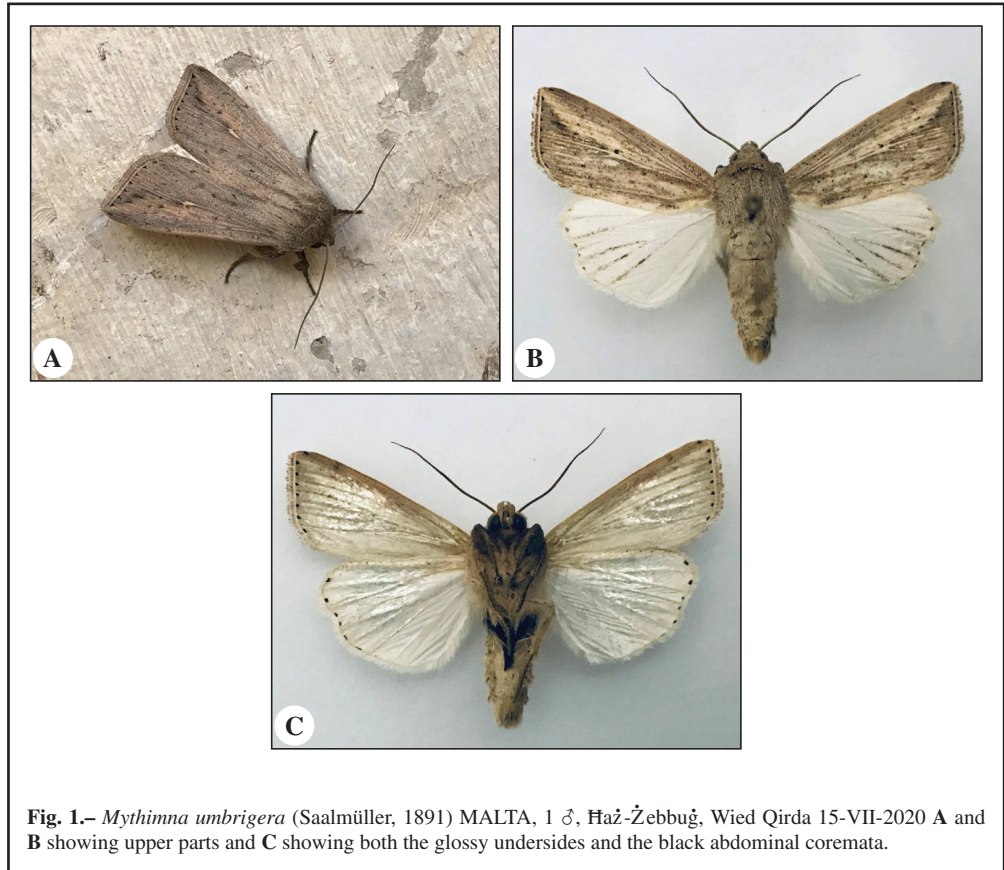


Fig. 1.– *Mythimna umbriger* (Saalmüller, 1891) MALTA, 1 ♂, Җаž-Җебуғ, Wied Qirda 15-VII-2020 A and B showing upper parts and C showing both the glossy undersides and the black abdominal coremata.

Discussion

The early stages of *Mythimna umbriger* (Saalmüller, 1891) are still unknown and undescribed but apparently the larvae feed on sugarcane (*Saccharum officinalis* L.). Sugarcane is occasionally cultivated in Malta but potentially the larvae might have switched to closely related grasses such as *Phragmites*, *Arundo* or *Sorghum* species. *Arundo* is common in the valley system where the species was discovered. Even though according to HACKER *et al.* (2002), the species is bivoltine in Europe, the fact that the author found a number of specimens during spring, summer and autumn in the same location with a three months gap in between each generation shows that the species breeds locally and produces at least three broods.

The species is new to the Maltese Lepidopterenfauna. I propose the Maltese name Mitimna tad-dell, after a transliteration of the scientific name.

With the addition of *Mythimna umbriger* (Saalmüller, 1891) to the Maltese Lepidopterenfauna, the *Mythimna* species recorded from Malta are:

Mythimna (Hyphilare) albipuncta ([Denis & Schiffermüller], 1775)
Mythimna (Hyphilare) l-album (Linnaeus, 1767)
*Mythimna (Hyphilare) umbriger*a (Saalmüller, 1891)
Mythimna (Morphopoliana) languida (Walker, 1858)
Mythimna (Mythimna) vitellina (Hübner, [1808])
Mythimna (Prodigithymna) prominens (Walker, 1856)
Mythimna (Pseudaletia) unipuncta (Haworth, 1809)
Mythimna (Sablina) sicula (Treitschke, 1835)

Acknowledgments

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J. A.
166 'Infinity'
Vjal ix-Xarolla
MT-Zurrieq, ZRQ1617
MALTA / MALTA
E-mail: jonagius@msn.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4875-0524>

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