

SHORT SCIENTIFIC NOTES

Record of New Alternate Host Plants of the Slug Caterpillar, *Contheyla rotunda* Hampson (Eucleidae : Lepidoptera)

The slug caterpillar, *Contheyla rotunda* Hampson is one among the minor pests of the coconut palm. But devastation by these caterpillars to extensive areas of coconut cultivation was also reported. The recorded alternate host plants of the pest include banana, wild arrowroot plants, teabushes¹ and grasses². The areca palm is a new record to the list of alternate hosts of these slug caterpillars. The caterpillars attack the areca palms of the species *Areca catechu* L. and *Areca triandra* Roxb. The green stem, leaflets, leaf petiole, spathes and inflorescence provide food for the caterpillars. The cocoa plant *Theobroma cacao* L. var. *Criollo* is another new record to the alternate host plants of *Contheyla rotunda*. Caterpillars feed on both tender and older leaves. The green manure plant *Pueraria javanica* grown as a cover crop in arecanut garden provides another suitable host for the caterpillars. Areca palm, cocoa and *Pueraria* thus serve favourable feeding and breeding sites for the caterpillars during epidemic outbreaks.

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Mysore, June 12, 1972.

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1. Nirula, K. K., Antony, J., Sahasranaman, K. N. and Menon, K. P. V., *Indian Coconut J.*, 1954, 7 (4), 143.
2. Sathiamma, B., Abraham, V. A. and Chandu Kurian, *Indian Fmg.*, 1972, 21 (2), 39.

Occurrence of *Haplothrips ganglbaueri* Schmutz (Phlaeothripidae : Thysanoptera) as a Serious Pest of Rice Earheads in Kerala

Adults and nymphs of *Haplothrips ganglbaueri* Schmutz were recorded as serious pests of developing rice panicles in Trichur and Palghat Districts during the second crop season of the year 1971-72 (August-September to January-February) on IR-8 and Jaya varieties.

The incidence of the pest was relatively more serious in the first fortnight of December and the observations taken from infested fields in this peak period of activity of the pest have indicated numeri-

cal preponderance of nymphs in the population, estimated at 90%. Nymphs and adults were found to cluster on flower-heads, lacerating and feeding on lemma, palea and ovarian tissues. The degree of spikelet damage induced by feeding activity of the pest ranged from 80 to 100%. The feeding damage on the lemma and palea caused development of irregularly oval and diffused brownish patches.

Adults and nymphs when released in polythene cages at 40 to 60 per panicle of potted IR-8 plants, the characteristic symptoms of spikelet damage could be reproduced in the course of 6 days under laboratory conditions.

Adults are dark brownish-grey and slender with a mean body length of 1.064 mm, with well pronounced 7-segmented antennae.

During the period when peak infestation by the pest was experienced, the weather was humid with occasional drizzles and the sky was overcast for most parts of the day. The amount of solar energy received was abnormally low, the mean sunshine hours per day for the first fortnight of December 1971 being 4.466 only, as compared with the figures for the corresponding periods of the previous years which were 10.33, 7.28, 8.80 and 6.81 for 1970, 1969, 1968 and 1967 respectively.

The pest outbreaks were successfully controlled by low volume application of dimethoate, formothion, or phosphamidon applied at 400 g active ingredient per hectare.

The only other record of *H. ganglbaueri* as a pest of rice earheads is from Malaya by Corbett and Pagden (1941) as quoted by Ahmad Yunus (1964).

The authors are grateful to Dr. T. N. Anantha-krishnan, Entomology Research Unit, Loyola College, Madras, for identification of the pest.

Central Rice Research Station, Pattambi, Kerala, July 24, 1972.

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1. Ahmad Yunus quoting Corbett, G. H., and Pagden, H. T., "Insect pests of rice in Malaysia." *Proc. Symp. at the International Rice Research Institute, September 1964*, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1941, p. 632.