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Record of *SYNTOMIS PASSALIS* fabricius (Lepidoptera: arctiidae: tenuchinae) as a pest on coconut inflorescence

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The coconut palm is subjected to the infestation of a large number of insects during different stages of its growth and development. As many as 830 insects and mites associated with the coconut palm were listed (Kurian *et al.*, 1979). A few among them are responsible for heavy crop losses in coconut.

Recently, a caterpillar pest feeding on the male and female flowers of coconut was observed (Fig. 1 & 2). Infestation on the stigma and perianth portions of buttons up to two months growth resulted in button shedding (Fig. 3). Extent of damage to buttons ranged from 2.7 to 36.5 per cent (average of

30 palms). This insect was identified as *Syntomis passalis* Fabricius (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae: Tenuchinae) by the Commonwealth Institute of Entomology, London.

The caterpillars are black in colour and beset with urticating hairs. Moths are brightly coloured having scaleless spots on their wings. All stages of the pest except the moths were observed inside the infested spathes. Pupae were also found inside tunnels in the infested buttons. Moths were observed resting during day-time on the weed plants growing in coconut gardens. Its incidence was noticed in CPCRI farm and in nearby cultivators' gardens.



Fig. 1. Attack of caterpillars on male flowers

An allied species *Syntomis* (= *Amata*) *perixanthia* was recorded as a pest on tea in Formosa (Shiraki, 1919). Buresch (1914) had reported the incidence of *Syntomis* (= *Amata*) *phegea* L. on various grasses and pastures in

Bulgaria, As a pest on coconut inflorescence the incidence of *S. passalis* is a new record. Further studies on the biology of the pest and its intensity of infestation are envisaged.

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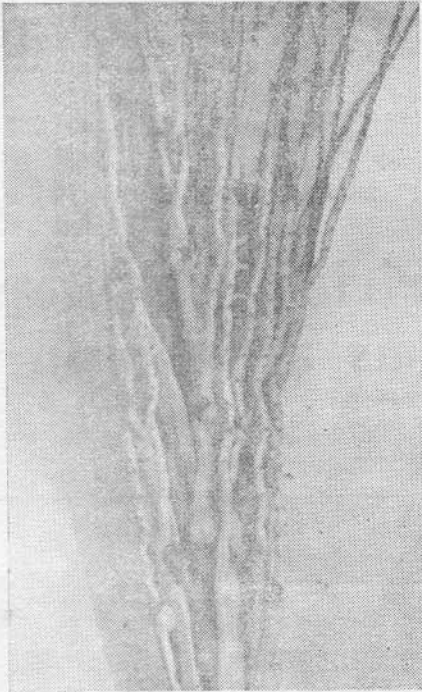


Fig. 2. Attack of caterpillars on female flowers

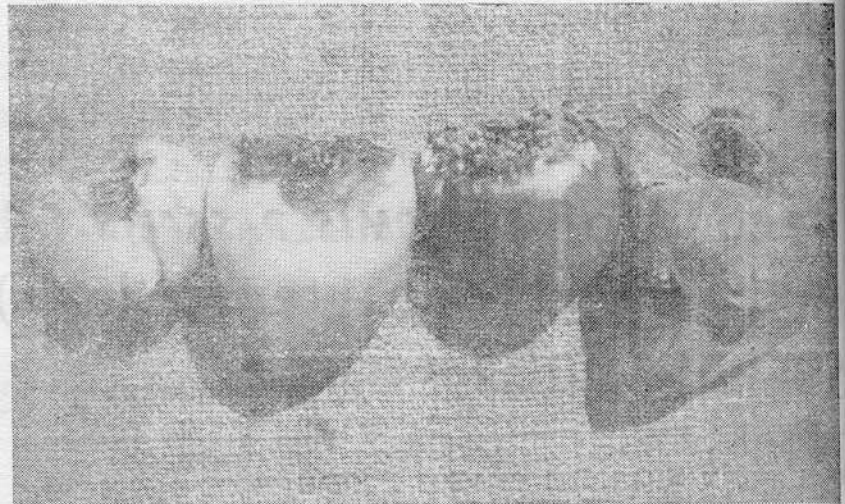


Fig. 3. Attack of caterpillars on buttons

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