

SHORT NOTES

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THE ARRIVAL OF ONE MORE EUCALYPTUS PEST IN SICILY: *THAUMASTOCORIS PEREGRINUS* CARPINTERO ET DELLAPÉ, 2006 (*Hemiptera Heteroptera Thaumastocoridae*)

*La comparsa di un nuovo parassita dell'Eucalyptus in Sicilia:*

*Thaumastocoris peregrinus* Carpintero et Dellapé, 2006 (*Hemiptera Heteroptera Thaumastocoridae*)

The Thaumastocoridae are a small family of tiny phytophagous sap feeding cimicomorphan bugs whose body length varies from 1.8 to 4.6 mm. They are generally testaceous in coloration and distinguished by the more or less flattened body and the strongly produced mandibular plates surpassing the apex of the clypeus. The most complete accounts of thaumastocorid morphology were provided by DRAKE & SLATER (1957) and SCHAEFER (1969), while its problematic phylogeny and uncertain placement in Cimicomorpha was thoroughly discussed in SCHUH *et al.* (2009).

The family Thaumastocoridae, originally restricted to the Southern hemisphere, is presently known to include six genera and 19 species (CASSIS *et al.*, 1999); these are subdivided into two subfamilies, Xylastodorinae present in South America, Cuba and Florida and Thaumastocorinae distributed in Australia and India. The latter are characterized by strongly projecting eyes, asymmetrical male genitalia and apical tibial appendices which enable them to cling easily to any surface.

The nominotypical genus *Thaumastocoris*, created by KIRKALDY (1908) for the new species *T. australicus*, is presently known to include fourteen species (NOACK *et al.*, 2011);



Fig. 1 — Adult male of *Thaumastocoris peregrinus* collected in Palermo (Sicily).

they all occur exclusively in Australia with the single exception of *Thaumastocoris peregrinus* Carpintero et Dellapé which in recent years has become a major pest of *Eucalyptus* in various regions of the world, particularly in plantations of the Southern hemisphere. Even if there are no doubts about its Australian origin, the species appeared first in South Africa in 2003 from where it was recorded as a recently introduced species by JACOBS & NESER (2005), who misidentified it as *T. australicus*. One year later it was found in Argentina, where it was recognized as a non native bug introduced from Australia and described as a new species with its current name (CARPINTERO & DELLAPÉ, 2006).

The species (Fig. 1) is easily distinguished by the tubercle on the anterolateral angles of the anterior lobe of pronotum. It is commonly called “Bronze bug” by the tinge the leaves of *Eucalyptus* assume as effect of its punctures.

Outside Australia, Argentina and South Africa, the Bronze bug was found in Uruguay and Brazil in 2008 (MARTÍNEZ & BIANCHI, 2010; WILCKEN *et al.*, 2010), Chile in 2009 (IDE *et al.*, 2011), Malawi, Kenya and Zimbabwe (HURLEY *et al.*, 2011) and New Zealand in 2012 (SOPOW & BADER, 2012). Its effective spreading is due both to the intermediation of human activities offering the bug introduction pathways (world trade of *Eucalyptus* parts and plants) and to its capacity of natural dispersion over long distances.

The presence of *Thaumastocoris peregrinus* in Italy was first detected in July 2011 in two different localities in the environs of Rome (Guidonia and Maccarese) and recorded in a popular web forum ([www.entomologitaliani.net/forum](http://www.entomologitaliani.net/forum)); between September and December of the same year the species had become established in several localities of Latium (LAUDONIA & SASSO, 2012) and in a couple of years had spread to the whole coastal area of Central Italy in Tuscany, Latium and Campania, sucking leaves of different species of *Eucalyptus*.

In early July 2014 I intercepted a male of *T. peregrinus* flying at dusk in Palermo, in the SW part of the town, in an area where several *Eucalyptus* trees are present. Considering the invasive capacity of the Bronze bug, its potential damage to *Eucalyptus* trees which can eventually lead to the death of infested trees and the fact that it has been reported to sting people in areas heavily infested, its likely spreading in Sicily should be monitored very carefully.

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