

Short scientific note

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First record of *Tropinota squallida* ssp. *pilosa* from Italy (Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae, Cetoniinae)

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Abstract

Tropinota squallida ssp. *pilosa* (Brullé, 1832), widely distributed in North Africa, Near East and south-eastern Europe, is recorded for the first time from Italy after its finding on Linosa Island (Pelagie Archipelago, Channel of Sicily). For the same island was previously reported the nominal subspecies, whose occurrence however has not been confirmed by recent entomological surveys.

Keywords: *Tropinota squallida pilosa*, Scarabaeidae, Cetoniinae, Linosa Island, Sicily, biogeography.

Introduction

Tropinota squallida (Scopoli, 1763) is a polytypic species occurring with its nominal form in most of Europe, with the subspecies *canariensis* Lindberg, 1950 in the Canary Islands, and with the subspecies *pilosa* (Brullé, 1832) in North Africa, Near East and south-eastern Europe (Smetana 2006).

This latter, described by Brullé (1832) from Greece as *Cetonia pilosa*, has a wide distribution that includes Bulgaria, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia (Barraud 1985; 1992; Smetana 2006; Tauzin & Rittner 2012; Dutto & Sabatinelli 2014; Handal & Amr 2018). In some areas of its range, as many other cetoniid beetles, it is considered a serious pest in fruit orchards (Atteyyat & Al-Alawi 2017; Soltani & Hamdi 2023; Soltani & Rahmouni, 2024).

During a recent visit to the Island of Linosa (Pelagie Islands, Channel of Sicily), one of us (AS) had the opportunity to collect several specimens of *T. squallida* that after careful examination resulted to belong to the subspecies *pilosa*. This finding allows therefore to confirm for the first time the occurrence of this taxon in the Italian territory.

Materials and Methods

The studied specimens were collected by using an entomological net, mainly on the flowers of Asteraceae, during daylight hours. Subsequently, they have been mounted on glue boards and examined with a Optika SZM-2 stereo-binocular microscope. Photos were taken with a Canon EOS 2000D camera equipped with a lens Laowa 100mm f/2.8 Ultra-Macro 2:1. Specimens are kept in the authors' collections.

Results

Tropinota squallida ssp. *pilosa* (Brullé, 1832)

Material examined. Italy: Linosa Island (Agrigento province, Sicily), Contrada Faraglioni, 35.8663582° N, 12.8801249° E, on *Reichardia tingitana* (L.) Roth (Asteraceae), 14 February 2025, leg. A. Santanello, 1♀; Linosa Island (Agrigento province, Sicily), same locality, 35.8601352° N, 12.8659605° E, on *Glebionis coronaria* (L.) Cass. ex Spach (Asteraceae), *Sonchus oleraceus* L., 14 February 2025, leg. A. Santanello, 1♂, 1♀; Linosa Island (Agrigento province, Sicily), sentiero delle Turriache,

35.8726843° N, 12.8622527° E, on *Brassica fruticulosa* Cirillo (Brassicaceae), *S. oleraceus*, *R. tingitana*, 14 February 2025, leg. A. Santanello, 3♂♂, 2♀♀; Linosa Island (Agrigento province, Sicily), Mannarazza, 35.8647294° N, 12.8621739° E, on *S. oleraceus*, 14 February 2025, leg. A. Santanello, 1♂, 2♀♀.



Fig. 1 – A specimen of *Tropinota squalida* ssp. *pilosa* from Linosa Island, dorsal view (length 11 mm).



Fig. 2 – The same specimen as above, lateral view (length 11 mm).

Discussion

Situated in the middle of the Strait of Sicily, the Pelagie Islands are well known as biogeographic crossroad between European and African fauna and host a large number of species closely related to this latter or occurring in North Africa. However, the records of *T. squalida* given in literature for Linosa, as well as for Lampedusa and Isola dei Conigli, are exclusively referred to the nominal form (see Gridelli 1930; 1960; Arnone et al. 1995; Goggi 2004), and the same goes for the nearest Pantelleria and Maltese Islands (see Arnone et al. 1995; Pivotti et al. 2011).

It should be noted, however, that during the recent survey carried out in Linosa all the specimens collected were found to belong to the ssp. *pilosa*. In fact, they fully correspond to the differential characters given by Baraud (1992: 818), who wrote “diffère de la forme nominative par son aspect bien luisant et par la pilosité élytrale qui est par endroits groupée en pinceaux, principalement au voisinage des taches blanches. La pilosité est tantôt jaunâtre, tantôt orangée” [differs from the nominative form by its very shiny appearance and by the elytral hairs which are grouped in brushes in places, mainly near the white spots. The hairs are sometimes yellowish, sometimes orange].

Further confirmations also emerged from their comparison with the descriptions provided by Sabatinelli et al. (2010) and by the website “The Scarab of the Levant” (www.glaphyridae.com), both underlining the occurrence of shining teguments and of and important yellowish/orange pilosity on the elytra, grouped in brushes of hairs, especially detectable on the fresh specimens.

The finding of this taxon, never reported before at regional (Arnone & Romano 2020; Muscarella 2022) and national scale (Ballerio et al. 2014), is the first record for the Italian territory. However, even assuming a recent colonization of Linosa by *T. squalida* ssp. *pilosa*, it is difficult to explain the apparent absence of the nominal form, which could depend on i) lack of specific and accurate research; ii) a possible misidentification of populations previously reported for this island. On the other hand, the contemporary presence of both subspecies on a small insular surface (5.43 km²), even for its obvious taxonomic implications, seems to be excluded. Similarly, it is unlikely that an ecological segregation related to phenology could occur since this is substantially the same for both taxa, with a peak of adult activity between the end of February and the end of March in the whole southern Mediterranean area (see Sabatinelli & Schembri 1990; Sabatinelli et al. 2010; Soltani & Rahmouni, 2024).

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