

Yponomeuta morbillosus (Zeller, 1877) new to Europe and the Maltese Islands (Lepidoptera: Yponomeutidae)

J. Agius & A. Sciberras

Abstract

Yponomeuta morbillosus (Zeller, 1877) is reported for the first time from Europe and the Maltese Islands. In Malta the Genus *Yponomeuta* Latreille, 1796 is represented by two species: *Yponomeuta padella* (Linnaeus, 1758) and *Yponomeuta evonymella* (Linnaeus, 1758). Distribution, habits of the adult and larval host plant are included. A Maltese name is proposed for this new record.

KEY WORDS: Lepidoptera, Yponomeutidae, *Yponomeuta morbillosus*, Maltese Islands.

Yponomeuta morbillosus (Zeller, 1877) nuevo para Europa y Malta
(Lepidoptera: Yponomeutidae)

Resumen

Se registra por primera vez para Europa y Malta a *Yponomeuta morbillosus* (Zeller, 1877). En Malta el género *Yponomeuta* Latreille, 1796 está representado por dos especies: *Yponomeuta padella* (Linnaeus, 1758) e *Yponomeuta evonymella* (Linnaeus, 1758). Se incluye la distribución, hábitat del adulto y la planta nutricia de la larva. Se propone un nombre maltes para este nuevo registro.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lepidoptera, Yponomeutidae, *Yponomeuta morbillosus*, Malta.

Introduction

The genus *Yponomeuta* Latreille, 1796 comprises of around 80 species (DUGDALE *et al.*, 1999: 122), 9 of which are present in Europe (RENNWALD, 2018). Normally Yponomeutidae are phytophagous and have a wide, mainly palaeartic, distribution. The genus is represented in all major eco regions except South America and Antarctica (ULENBERG, 2009). Species from this genus are frequently considered as pests with larvae feeding communally on the foodplant by enveloping the tree with a large silken web, sometimes covering the entire tree or shrub (CARTER, 1984).

In the Maltese Islands a total of seven species within the Yponomeutoidea have been recorded so far, including three Yponomeutidae (SAMMUT, 2000): *Yponomeuta padella* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Zelleria oleastrella* (Millière, 1846) and *Yponomeuta evonymella* (Linnaeus, 1758) being the latest addition to the Yponomeutidae species of the Maltese Islands (SEGUNA, 2007).

Material

MALTA: (162 exemplars) Qormi 14-17-XI-2017, coll. A. Sciberras. All specimens were recorded at a garden cente where it is being assumed that the species has been imported. (Figure 1).

Distribution

The species is naturally found throughout Kenya and Tanzania with the type locality being Zanzibar in Tanzania (ZELLER, 1877). This is the first record for Malta and Europe. Even though the larvae of most *Yponomeuta* species feed on Celastraceae (ULENBERG, 2009), apparently this species lives on trees of the genus *Elaeodendron* (GARDNER, 1957). In fact it was confirmed that at least two garden centres (one at Qormi and another one at Burmarrad) have imported plants from this genus in the past which substantiates further the hypothesis that this moth was imported accidentally.

The species is new both to the Maltese and the European lepidoptero fauna. We propose the Maltese name Bahrija Griza tat-Tikek, after a transliteration of the scientific name.

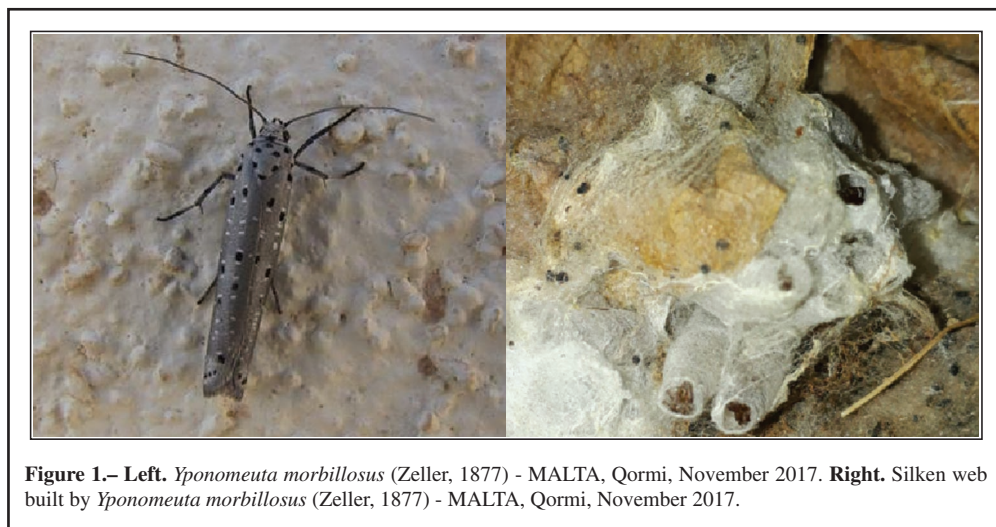


Figure 1.– Left. *Yponomeuta morbillosus* (Zeller, 1877) - MALTA, Qormi, November 2017. Right. Silken web built by *Yponomeuta morbillosus* (Zeller, 1877) - MALTA, Qormi, November 2017.

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