

Short Paper

First report of the exotic weevil *Stenopelmus rufinasus* (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) occurrence in Iran

Atousa Farahpour-Haghani^{1*}, Ivo Tosiveski^{2&3}, Bijan Yaghoubi¹, Mahdi Jalaeian¹ and Farzin Pouramir¹

1. Rice Research Institute of Iran (RRII), Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization (AREEO), Rasht, Iran.

2. Institute for Plant Protection and Environment, Department of Plant Pests, Banatska 33, 11080 Zemun, Serbia.

3. Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), 1 Rue des Grillons, 2800 Delémont, Switzerland.

Abstract: The water fern weevil, *Stenopelmus rufinasus* Gyllenhal (Coleoptera: Curculionidae), is considered as the most important biological control agent of *Azolla* spp. in the world. *Azolla* spp. was introduced in Iran in 1986. In August 2017, two specimens of *S. rufinasus* were collected on *Azolla* spp. in waterways near Anzali lagoon and Rice Research Institute of Iran (RRII) in Guilan province for the first time. Identification was based on molecular sequencing. This is the first record of *S. rufinasus* from Iran.

Keywords: Biological control, *Azolla* spp., weevil, Guilan province

Introduction

The semi-aquatic weevil, *Stenopelmus rufinasus* Gyllenhal, 1836 (Coleoptera: Curculionidae), is native to the southern and western United States (LeConte, 1876). It was accidentally transported to Europe through the plant materials from Argentina and Paraguay at the beginning of twentieth century. The weevil was introduced into South Africa in 1997 for biological control of water fern, *Azolla filiculoides* Lamarck (Azollaceae) and controlled this invasive aquatic weed successfully (Winston *et al.*, 2014; Parys *et al.*, 2015). This weevil is known as one of the most successful biological control agents ever employed worldwide; however, there was no record of this weevil's occurrence on *Azolla* spp. in Asia until 2014 (Winston *et al.*, 2014). The first occurrence of *S. rufinasus* in Asia was reported in October 2017 (Friedman, 2017).

According to Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI, 2018) databases, different species of *Azolla* spp. exists in Asia and some of them such as *Azolla pinnata* R. Brown have been reported as native species in India, China, Japan and many other areas. The water ferns were introduced to Iran in 1986 as green fertilizer for rice fields (Khoshravesh *et al.*, 2009). Due to poor management, *Azolla* spp. invaded important aquatic natural habitats, such as the Anzali and Amir-Kalayeh lagoons in northern regions of Iran, and have become problematic in some of the rice fields as well (Farahpour-Haghani *et al.*, 2016a). *Stenopelmus rufinasus* is known as a great biological control agent for water fern, *A. filiculoides*, worldwide. In addition, it has been demonstrated that this weevil can feed on mosquito fern, *A. pinnata*, and Carolina mosquito-fern, *Azolla cristata* Kaulf (previously known as *Azolla caroliniana*) as well (Winston *et al.*, 2014; Parys *et al.*, 2015). *Stenopelmus rufinasus* has not been reported from Iran and so far, *Rhopalosiphum nymphaeae* (Linnaeus) (Hemiptera.: Aphididae), *Diasemiopsis ramburialis*

Handling Editor: Ali Asghar Talebi

*Corresponding author, e-mail: hpapiliona@gmail.com
Received: 9 December 2017, Accepted: 21 February 2018
Published online: 15 May 2018

Duponchel (Lepidoptera: Crambidae), *Nomophila noctuella* Denis & Schiffermuller (Lepidoptera: Crambidae) and *Cataglyphis lemnae* (Linnaeus) (Lepidoptera: Crambidae) have been recorded as the most important insects that feed on *Azolla* spp. in northern regions of Iran (Farahpour-Haghani *et al.*, 2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017). This is the first record of *S. rufinasus* from Iran.

Materials and Methods

Stenopelmus rufinasus was collected from water fern, *Azolla* spp., in the Anzali lagoon and RRII water ways, in 2017. Males and females were released on fresh water fern in laboratory and eggs were collected after 3 days. A replicated rearing test (10 ×), was carried out with 1, 3 and 5 pairs (one male and female) in laboratory in order to confirm its feeding on *Azolla* spp. Transparent plastic cups (8.5 by 11cm, diameter by height) filled with 200ml of water and 10g of water fern and covered with net were used as rearing chambers. All life stages were photographed separately during the development time. Adults were examined by identification keys in RRII and after primary identification were sent to CABI for molecular identification by the second author of this paper.

Results

The weevil was collected for the first time in August 2017 from Anzali lagoon. Results of molecular identification indicated that the sequence of weevils collected from Iran were 100% identical with *S. rufinasus* sequence, KM440642 (NCBI database), originated from Germany (Neuburg an der Donau) that was published by Hendrich *et al.* (2015). Throughout the sampling site in Anzali lagoon, water ferns were damaged severely. Adults, pupae and last instar larvae were collected from water fern samples in laboratory in high density populations. Female laid eggs after 3 days in laboratory and after about 12 days water fern were almost wiped out, in some of the

replicates. Last instar larvae are reddish brown with black head capsule. Pupa are off brown and pupation usually occurs in pupal shelters made from feeding materials. Adults are dark brown to black, small in size and have shorter proboscis compared with other weevils.

Discussion

Stenopelmus Schönherr is a genus from Stenopelmi group. This group is monophyletic and placed within the tribe Eirrhiniini (Curculionidae) which is composed of mostly aquatic and semi aquatic weevils (LeConte, 1876). The presence of *S. rufinasus* is closely related to the occurrence of the *Azolla* spp. worldwide. In Guilan province, sampling sites were under regular monitoring for almost two years but damages caused by these weevils on *Azolla* spp. appeared in August 2017, and subsequently adults were collected upon careful examinations. Another population of weevil was found in a waterway in RRII at the same time. Therefore, apparently these weevils were imported to Iran recently. There is no information how the species was introduced to Iran. However, this would be an important beneficial factor for water fern biological control in Iran.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dr. Faramarz Alinia, the head of, Rice Research Institute of Iran for providing financial support, the colleagues of plant protection department and Department of Plant Pests, Institute for Plant Protection and Environment of Serbia and Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International for their cooperation and support.

Reference

- CABI. 2018. Invasive Species Compendium. www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/8119, 8120, 112634, 121923.
- Farahpour-Haghani, A., Hassanpour, M., Alinia, F., Nouri-Ganbalani, G., Razmjou, J.

- and Agassiz, D. 2017. Water ferns *Azolla* spp. (Azollaceae) as new host plants for the small China-mark moth, *Cataclysta lemnata* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Lepidoptera, Crambidae, Acentropinae). *Nota Lepidopterologica*, 40: 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.3897/nl.40.10062>.
- Farahpour-Haghani, A., Jalaieian, M. and Landry, B. 2016a. *Diasemiopsis ramburialis* (Duponchel) (Lepidoptera, Pyralidae s.l., Spilomelinae) in Iran: first record for the country and first host plant report on water fern (*Azolla filiculoides* Lam., Azollaceae). *Nota Lepidopterologica*, 39: <https://doi.org/10.3897/nl.39.6887>.
- Farahpour-Haghani, A., Jalaieian, M., Alinia, F. and Majidi-shilsar, F. 2016b. First report of Rush Veneer *Nomophila noctuella* (Lepidoptera: Crambidae: Spilomelinae) on Water Fern in wetlands and rice fields, Proceeding of 22nd Iranian Plant Protection Congress, 27-30 August, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Tehran, Karaj, Iran.
- Farahpour-Haghani, A., Jalaieian, M. and Mehrparvar, M. 2015. First report of *Rhopalosiphum nymphaeae* (L.) (Hem.: Aphididae) on *Azolla filiculoides* from Iran and its male formation on secondary host plant. *Journal of Crop Protection*, 4 (4): 557-561.
- Hendrich, L., Morinière, J., Haszprunar, G., Hebert, P. D., Hausmann, A., Köhler, F. and Balke, M. 2015. A comprehensive DNA barcode database for Central European beetles with a focus on Germany: adding more than 3500 identified species to BOLD. *Molecular Ecology Resources*, 15 (4): 795-818.
- Friedman, A. L. L. 2017. The first record of the *Azolla* frond weevil *Stenopelmus rufinasus* (Curculionidae: Brachycerinae: Tanysphyrini) in Israel. *Israel Journal of Entomology*, 47: 103-106.
- Khoshravesh, R., Akhiani, H., Eskandari, M. and Greuter, W. 2009. Ferns and fern allies of Iran. *Rostaniha*, Vol. 10 (Supplement 1), 140 pp.
- LeConte, J. L. and Horn, G. H. 1876. The Rhynchophora of America, north of Mexico. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 15 (96): vii-442.
- Parys, K. A., Tewari, S. and Johnson, S. J. 2015. Adults of the Waterfern Weevil, *Stenopelmus rufinasus* Gyllenhal (Coleoptera: Curculionidae), Feed on a Non-Host Plant, *Salvinia minima* Baker, in Louisiana. *The Coleopterists Bulletin*, 69 (2): 316-318.
- Winston, R. L., Schwarzländer, M., Hinz, H. L., Day, M. D., Cock, M. J. W. and Julien, M. H. 2014. *Biological Control of Weeds: A World Catalogue of Agents and Their Target Weeds*, 5th Ed. USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Technology Enterprise Team, Morgantown, West Virginia. FHTET-2014-04. 838 pp.

اولین گزارش فعالیت سرخرطومی (*Stenopelmus rufinasus* Gyllenhal, (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) در ایران

آتوسا فرحپور حقانی^{۱*}، ایوو توسیوسکی^{۲،۳}، بیژن یعقوبی^۱، مهدی جلابیان^۱ و فرزین پورامیر^۱

۱- مؤسسه تحقیقات برنج کشور، سازمان تحقیقات، ترویج و آموزش کشاورزی، رشت، ایران.

۲- مؤسسه حفاظت از گیاهان و محیطزیست، بخش آفات گیاهی، زیمون، صربستان.

۳- سازمان جهانی کشاورزی و علوم زیستی، دلمونت، سوئیس.

* پست الکترونیکی نویسنده مسئول مکاتبه: hpapilion@gmail.com

دریافت: ۱۸ آذر ۱۳۹۶؛ پذیرش: ۲ اسفند ۱۳۹۶

چکیده: سرخرطومی آزولا، (*Stenopelmus rufinasus* Gyllenhal (Coleoptera: Curculionidae)، به‌عنوان مهم‌ترین عامل کنترل بیولوژیک آزولا در دنیا شناخته می‌شود. آزولا در سال ۱۹۸۶ به ایران وارد شد. در مرداد ماه ۱۳۹۶ دو نمونه از *S. rufinasus* برای اولین بار از کانال‌های آبرسانی نزدیک به تالاب انزلی و مؤسسه تحقیقات برنج کشور (RRII) در استان گیلان از روی آزولا جمع‌آوری شدند. شناسایی نمونه‌ها با استفاده از روش توالی‌یابی مولکولی انجام شد. این اولین گزارش *S. rufinasus* از ایران محسوب می‌شود.

واژگان کلیدی: کنترل بیولوژیک، آزولا، سرخرطومی، استان گیلان