

**A new species of *Alaocyba* PERRIS, 1869
(Insecta: Coleoptera: Curculionidae: Raymondionyminae)
from the Maltese Islands**

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Abstract

A new species of *Alaocyba* PERRIS, 1869 is described from the Maltese Islands (Central Mediterranean). *Alaocyba melitensis* sp.n. is the first record of this tyrrhenian genus for Malta. Ecological notes are provided.

Key words: *Alaocyba*, Coleoptera, Curculionidae, Raymondionyminae, new species, Maltese Islands, Central Mediterranean.

Zusammenfassung

Eine neue Art von *Alaocyba* PERRIS, 1869 wird von den maltesischen Inseln (Mittelmeer) beschrieben. *Alaocyba melitensis* sp.n. ist die erste Meldung dieser im tyrrhenischen Raum verbreiteten Gattung für Malta. Ökologische Angaben werden gemacht.

Introduction

The Raymondionyminae of the world have been revised by OSELLA (1977) in which seven species have been ascribed to the tyrrhenian genus *Alaocyba* PERRIS, 1869. As a result of insufficient research in certain territories, OSELLA (1977) pointed out that the genus is probably also present in other parts of Central and Southern Italy, Sicily and possibly also in the Maltese Islands.

During recent surveys for endogenous beetles in the Maltese Islands conducted by one of us, a new species of *Alaocyba* was collected which is described herein and compared with its closest relatives.

Acknowledgements and Acronyms

The material used during this study is deposited in the following institutions and private collections:

CDM	coll. D. Mifsud, Malta	NHMB	Naturhistorisches Museum Basel, Switzerland
CLM	coll. L. Magnano, Verona, Italy	NHML	The Natural History Museum, London, U.K.
MCSN	Museo Civico di Storia Naturale "G. Doria", Genova, Italy	NMW	Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Austria

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Alaocyba melitensis sp.n.

Type material: **Holotype**, ♂: Malta, Buskett, 7.XI.1995, leg. D. Mifsud (NMW). **Paratypes**: 8 exs., same data as holotype; Buskett; 7 exs., 17.XI.1995; 43 exs., 11.I.1996; 1 ex., 27.XI.1997 (CDM, CLM, MCSN, NHMB, NHML, NMW).

Description: Colour brownish. Length of rostrum equal to three quarters of prothorax length, slightly curved, with antennal insertions in its distal third (Fig. 1). Scape almost meeting apex of pronotum. Head conical and separated from rostrum as shown in Figure 1. First funicular segment subcylindrical, second and third segments equally wide as long, and fourth to sixth segments rather transverse. Subglobular clava as long as distal five funicular segments. Prothorax 1.4 times longer than wide, weakly rounded at its sides, with maximum width at one-third from anterior margin. Apex of prothorax wider than base. Pronotum with irregular punctures, with smooth narrow longitudinal median area (without punctures) dilated towards anterior. Sides of elytra subparallel, more than twice as long as wide, striae as wide as intervals, with large punctures, in size slightly larger than those on pronotum. Such punctures are separated by a distance equivalent to their diameter. The third intervals are somewhat more elevated and evident. Fore tibiae dilated after the proximal third, thereafter with sides rather parallel, rounded from the exterior margin. A row of small sparse setae is present on the inner edge of the dilated part of the tibiae. Body covered by small erect whitish setae (Fig. 1), their lengths being equal to or slightly longer than four or five times the diameter of punctures present on prothorax or elytra. Body length including rostrum 1.5 mm, and without rostrum 1.3 mm. Length and maximum width of prothorax 0.35 mm and 0.28 mm respectively. Length and maximum width of elytra 0.8 mm and 0.35 mm respectively.

Differential diagnosis: *Alaocyba melitensis* sp.n. is most closely related to *A. lampedusae* DODERO, 1916 (Distribution: Lampedusa) from which it differs in having a longer prothorax with less rounded sides; more dense and pronounced sculpturing on the prothorax, almost as that found on the elytral striae and a well defined longitudinal median area on the pronotum without punctures. Elytral humeri less pointed with sides subparallel almost throughout entire length. Rostrum somewhat longer and body dimensions larger. In *A. lampedusae* the sides of prothorax are more rounded and shorter; punctures on prothorax are less dense and less pronounced than those of elytral striae; elytral humeri slightly more pointed, with sides more rounded; rostrum is slightly shorter and overall body dimensions smaller. *Alaocyba melitensis* sp.n. is also related to *A. theryi* MEYER, 1897 (Distribution: Tunisia and Algeria). The latter, however, is more dorsally flattened, with denser and deeper punctures on prothorax, and more pronounced punctures on elytral stria. The general body shape of *A. melitensis* sp.n. is more convex, with sparser and shallower punctures on prothorax similar to those on elytra. The rostrum is similar in both species.

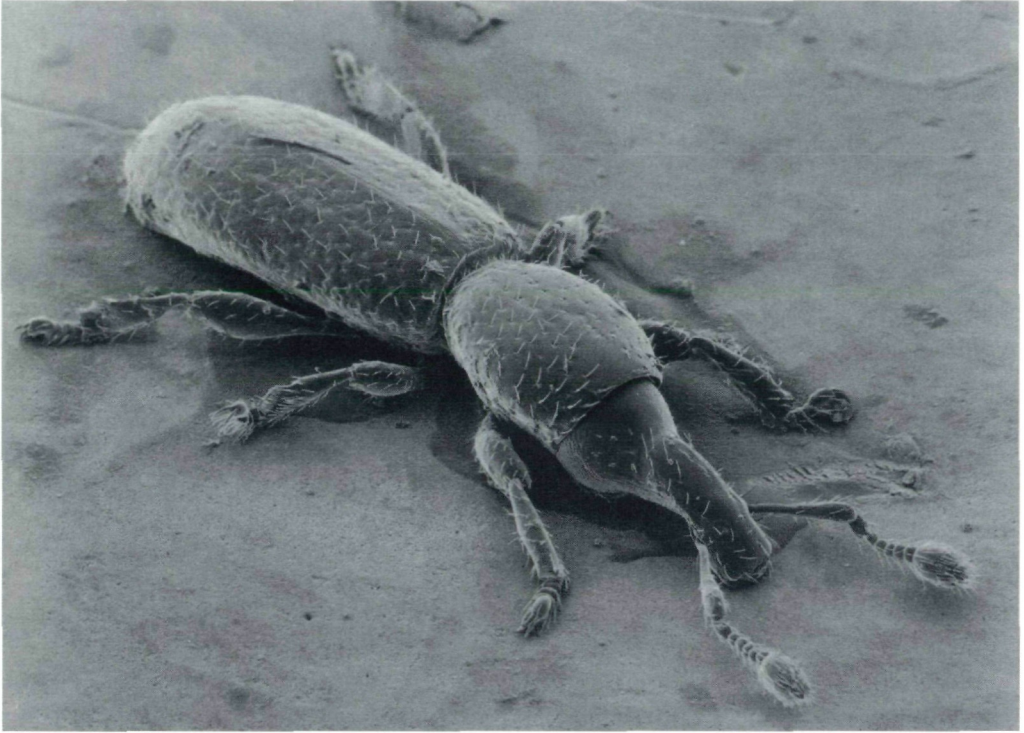


Fig. 1: Habitus of *Alaocyba melitensis* sp.n.

The new species can be included in the key given by OSELLA (1977) as follows:

- 5 Pronotum with deep punctures, arranged in subparallel rows to the sides of a smooth median line. Second to sixth funicular segments subquadrate. Punctures on elytral striae well evident and third intervals slightly elevated. Length without rostrum 1.3 - 1.4 mm. Abruzzo *A. marcuzzi* OSELLA
- Pronotum with punctures, placed with no particular arrangement 5 bis
- 5 bis Pronotum with deep and sparse punctures, irregularly placed towards the sides of a smooth narrow longitudinal median line. Second and third funicular segments equally wide as long, and fourth to sixth segments rather transverse. Prothorax longer than wide (1.4 x) with weakly rounded sides. Elytral humeri only slightly evident, with sides subparallel almost throughout entire length. Length without rostrum 1.3 mm. Malta *A. melitensis* sp.n.
- Pronotum with sparse and rather weak punctures, without a smooth narrow longitudinal median line. Second to sixth funicular segments transverse. Prothorax slightly longer than wide (1.2 x) with evidently rounded sides. Elytral humeri more evident with slightly rounded sides. Length without rostrum 1.1 - 1.2 mm. Lampedusa
..... *A. lampedusae* DODERO

Distribution: So far known only from Malta (Central Mediterranean).

Ecology: *Alaocyba melitensis* sp.n. was collected in soil (20 - 40 cm depth) under *Quercus ilex* and *Ficus carica* trees. It was collected exclusively during the winter (November till January).

Etymology: Named after the Island of Malta, where the new species was collected.

Discussion

Alaocyba melitensis sp.n. was collected in only one locality in Malta (Buskett) which can be defined as a semi-natural woodland dominated by typical Mediterranean wood species such as *Pinus halepensis* and *Quercus ilex* and introduced species such as *Cupressus sempervirens*. This habitat type is very rare in the Maltese Islands. Little morphological variation was encountered in the material examined.

The genus *Alaocyba* was never recorded from the Maltese Islands before. The distribution of the genus can be defined as tyrrhenian. To date, a total of eight *Alaocyba* species have been described, six with geographical distributions exclusively within the North-African continental plate and the remaining two with distributions in Sardinia and on the Adriatic coast of Central Italy. These two geographical groups were defined by OSELLA (1977) as the "African" and "Sardo-Italo" groups respectively. OSELLA (1977) also indicated the strong affinities of the genus *Alaocyba* with *Gilbertia* from California (now *Gilbertiola* OSELLA; see OSELLA 1982).

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