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First record of *Steraspis squamosa* (KLUG, 1829) in Europe (Greece, Crete) (Coleoptera, Buprestidae)

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Abstract

The genus *Steraspis* DEJEAN, 1833 (Coleoptera, Buprestidae) is documented for the first time on European soil through the finding of two specimens of *Steraspis squamosa* (KLUG, 1829) in old tamarisk trees on the island of Crete, Greece (city of Chania, West Crete).

Introduction

Steraspis (Coleoptera, Buprestidae) are large buprestids of the subfamily Chrysochroinae, subtribe Eucallopistina, recently revised by CURLETTI (2009), with almost all species restricted to sub-Saharan Africa. *Steraspis speciosa* Klug, 1829 and *S. squamosa* (KLUG, 1829) are also known from parts of North Africa and the Middle East (VAYSSIÈRES & BELLAMY 2012 and KUBÁŇ 2016). *Steraspis squamosa* are sizeable beetles (up to 44 mm long) with green dorsal coloration and red elytral margins (CURLETTI 2009). Ventrally, they are characterized by a prosternal plate with three longitudinal keels and whitish pubescence, while abdominal coloration is varying from green to dark bronze, with white pubescence concentrated on spots near the basis of abdominal sternites (CURLETTI 2009). Typically, *S. squamosa* are associated with branches and trunks of Tamarisk trees (CURLETTI 2009). According to VAYSSIÈRES & BELLAMY (2012), *S. squamosa* was recorded on *Tamarix gallica* in Israel and on *Tamarix* spp. in Egypt. In Mauritania, specimens of *S. squamosa* were collected on *Tamarix senegalensis* (VAYSSIÈRES & BELLAMY 2012).



Abb. 1: Blooming tamarisk trees, on location, West Crete, September 13, 2017.



Abb. 2: Exit holes on old tamarisk trunk, on location, West Crete, Sept. 13, 2017.

Location, materials and methods

Two female specimens of *S. squamosa* were collected alive in urban territory of the city of Chania, West Crete (35°31'0" N, 24° 1'57" E), in a small grove of several, very old, tamarisk trees (*Tamarix* sp., most probable *T. nilotica* or *T. smyrnensis*, judging by the blooming period, **Abb. 1**). The taxonomy of *Tamarix* species of Crete is very complex and under reviewing research, as a new species has been very recently discovered in West Crete through DNA analysis (*Tamarix minoa* VILLAR et al. 2015), while the exact number of different tamarisk species on the island is still under scientific debate (for an extensive discussion on this subject please refer to VILLAR et al. 2014 and VILLAR et al. 2015).

The first beetle was collected alive on July 13, 2017 and the second one was collected alive on August 31, 2017. On September 17, 2017 we revisited the collecting site for additional specimens and/or exit holes, and we found an intact left elytron, while spotted several exit holes on tamarisk trunks and branches (**Abb. 2**).

The collected specimens were carefully examined under stereomicroscope and after identification, preserved in 99% ethanol for subsequent DNA analysis and deposited in the Natural History Museum of Crete, University of Crete (Arthropod collections).

Results and Discussion

The collected beetles were identified as *Steraspis squamosa* (KLUG, 1829) on the basis of external morphology and the key characters (a. lateral margin of pronotum in dorsal view sculptured like the rest of the surface, b. ventral side with spots of pubescence at the base of the abdominal sternites covering the different coloured integument with respect to the more glabrous area, c. furrow of pronotum barely visible, d. green overall coloration with red elytral margins, etc.), as described in CURLETTI (2009) (**Abb. 3**, **Abb. 4**). The first specimen was 31 mm long and the second 38 mm.

As to our knowledge this is the first record of the genus *Steraspis* on European soil. Although the beetle is present on all Eastern Mediterranean territories surrounding the island of Crete (and even considering the excellent dispersal abilities of the members of this genus), sea distances of Crete to the nearest Libyan coasts (>300 km) are quite prohibitive to any accidental dispersal through the sea barrier,



Abb. 3: Specimen of *Steraspis squamosa*, West Crete, August 31, 2017.



Abb. 4: dto., ventral view.

to our opinion. This is also supported by the fact that other faunal elements of African origin are extremely rare on the island of Crete, while there are only a few plant species considered of such an origin, respectively. The idea of accidental introduction through human intermediation seems more reasonable, even though tamarisk trees are not a subject to commercial transportation through Eastern Mediterranean countries (as, for instance, was the case with the quite recent introduction of the red palm weevils, *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*, through the commercial transportations of palm trees). Moreover, the finding was recorded in urban territory (city of Chania), a fact that advocates over human induced transportation. Certainly, very old and big tamarisk trees – perfect breeding spots for *S. squamosa* – are not widespread over the **Cretan** wild nature and up-to-day, have never been intensively targeted in our entomological research. Further efforts during the next years, may reveal more *Steraspis* populations on the island, as well.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Peter BRANDL for the encouraging discussions on Cretan *S. squamosa* specimens that led to this publication, Christodoulos MAKRIIS from Cyprus for the fruitful discussion on the specific identity of our specimens and the information of the status of the Cyprus species, as well as Angelos AMYNTAS & Loukia SPILANI (Biology Dept., University of Crete) for their efforts locating additional *Steraspis* specimens and exit holes in the field.

Zusammenfassung

Die Gattung *Steraspis* DEJEAN, 1833 (Coleoptera, Buprestidae) wird durch den Fund von zwei Exemplaren von *Steraspis squamosa* (KLUG, 1829) in einer alten Tamariske bei Chania, West Kreta, zum ersten Mal für Europa gemeldet.

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Ein Nachtrag zur „Kurzen Mitteilung“ im Nachrichtenblatt der bayerischen Entomologen 63 (3/4) 2014, S. 89-91

Manfred SOMMERER

Herr Dr. Arno SCHERLING (Beutelsbach) machte – im Zuge seiner im Entstehen begriffenen Biographie über den Münchener Porträtmaler Friedrich DÜRCK (1809-1884) – den Verfasser der o.a. *Kurzen Mitteilung* über Hermann DÜRCK freundlicherweise auf die Festschrift von 1937 zum 100jährigen Bestehen der *Zwanglosen Gesellschaft in München* aufmerksam, in welcher Hermann DÜRCK mehrfach erwähnt sei. Die Bemerkungen über unser MEG-Mitglied Hermann DÜRCK können aus dieser Quelle noch in einigen Punkten ergänzt werden.

Hermann DÜRCK war seit 1906 Mitglied in der 1837 entstandenen *Zwanglosen Gesellschaft*, die zunächst ein Kreis von Männern mit der gemeinsamen Liebe zur Poesie gewesen war, aber schon seit den 1850er und 1860er Jahren „die gesamte geistige und künstlerische Blüte von München in sich vereinigt“ hat. Dabei wurde Wert darauf gelegt, dass „stets eine Vielzahl von Berufen, die mit dem künstlerischen und geistigen Leben in Beziehung stehen, in ihr vertreten ist“. Bei den wöchentlichen geselligen Zusammenkünften am Mittwochabend hielt ein Mitglied einen Vortrag über ein Thema seiner Wahl. Hermann DÜRCK begann schon im Jahr seines Eintritts mit einem Bericht über seine medizinische Forschungsreise nach Sumatra und wird mit insgesamt 17 Vorträgen bis 1935 in der Chronik der Gesellschaft vermerkt. Darunter sind auch zwei Berichte (1927/28 und 1930/31 „mit Lichtbildern“) über seine Reisen nach Spanien und (1933/34) „durch die spanischen Riffgebirge und den Atlas“ in Marokko, bei denen offenbar auch seine Leidenschaft für die Schmetterlinge zur Sprache kam. Denn DÜRCK gehörte „zu den Männern, die nicht nur ein, sondern mehrere Steckenpferde reiten, was seinen zwanglosen Freunden zugutekommt, indem sie auch vom Reisenden und vom Insektenforscher und vom Sammler DÜRCK etwas hören“. Zum Spanien-Vortrag von 1927/28 und DÜRCKs „Jagd auf seltene Schmetterlinge“ reimte der damalige Geschäftsführer Ernst VON MÜLLER mit seinem notorisch „glücklichen Humor“ in der Chronik:

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