

Notes on some taxa of *Pelecophora* DEJEAN, 1821 (Coleoptera: Rhadalidae) from the Mascarene archipelago

Isidor S. PLONSKI

Abstract

The type species of *Pelecophora* DEJEAN, 1821 (Rhadalidae: Rhadalinae: Pelecophorini), viz. *P. illigeri illigeri* (GYLLENHAL, 1808) from Mauritius, is redescribed and a heretofore unreported colour variant is illustrated. The original description of *P. concinna* VINSON, 1946 is improved and a habitus illustration of a female is provided for the first time. New material of *P. marginalis* FAIRMAIRE, 1880 (with a discussion of the species' synonyms), *P. vittata interrupta* ALLUAUD, 1898, and *P. v. vittata* LAPORTE DE CASTELNAU, 1840 is reported together with observations on chromatic variability. A note on an occurrence of a *Pelecophora* sp. on Rodrigues Island is also given.

Key words. Cleroidea, distribution, taxonomy, variability, Mauritius, Réunion, Rodrigues.

Zusammenfassung

Anmerkungen zu einigen Taxa von *Pelecophora* DEJEAN, 1821 (Coleoptera: Rhadalidae) aus dem Maskarenen-Archipel. – Die Typusart von *Pelecophora* DEJEAN, 1821 (Rhadalidae: Rhadalinae: Pelecophorini), nämlich *P. illigeri illigeri* (GYLLENHAL, 1808) von Mauritius, wird wiederbeschrieben und eine bisher unbekannte Farbvariante vorgestellt. Die Originalbeschreibung von *P. concinna* VINSON, 1946 wird ergänzt; zum ersten Mal wird eine Habitusabbildung eines Weibchens vorgelegt. Neues Material von *P. marginalis* FAIRMAIRE, 1880 (zusammen mit einer Diskussion der Synonyme der Art), *P. vittata interrupta* ALLUAUD, 1898 und *P. v. vittata* LAPORTE DE CASTELNAU, 1840 wird zusammen mit Beobachtungen zur chromatischen Variabilität mitgeteilt. Über das Vorkommen einer *Pelecophora* sp. auf der Insel Rodrigues wird berichtet.

Introduction and outlook

The species of the genus *Pelecophora* are (sub-)endemic to the Mascarene archipelago (VINSON 1946) and probably represent a case of island radiation. Heretofore, 16 forms classified into 13 species and three subspecies were known from the island of Mauritius plus offshore islets, five forms representing four species and one subspecies from Réunion (VINSON 1946, 1953, 1957, PEACOCK 1987, PARNAUDEAU 2005). Their biology is largely unknown, except for collecting circumstances of adult specimens pertaining to habitat and phenology, and indirect observations on trophic ecology through dissections (see VINSON 1946: 251f. for details). VINSON (op. cit.) writes that “(...) the constant association of these seemingly carnivorous beetles with indigenous vegetation is a curious fact with [sic!, = which] deserves further investigation”. This fact could be explained with specialization: the beetles feed upon smaller phytophagous insects, which are feeding only on indigenous plant species.

New data on endemic insect taxa from Mauritius and Rodrigues (MOTALA & KRELL 2007, HUGEL 2012a, 2012b, 2014, 2015) stress the need for taxonomic inventory, monitoring, habitat management, and conservation strategies convenient for a focal species. The current distribution of the Mauritian *Pelecophora* forms needs to be researched and updated, because of ongoing habitat loss since the last monographic treatment by VINSON (1946) – e.g. do they still occur on Mt. Corps de Garde? Their threats and conservation status also need to be assessed – for the former see the general picture by MOTALA et al. (2007), while the later is connected to their larval micro-habitat and their diet.

In what follows, a new colour variant of *Pelecophora illigeri illigeri* (GYLLENHAL, 1808) is described based on two voucher specimens, demonstrating that the taxonomic inventory of Mauritius is still incomplete. In addition, material of other *Pelecophora* species studied and identified to species-group level is reported, discussed, or described where necessary. And photographic evidence for an occurrence of a *Pelecophora* sp. on Rodrigues island is mentioned.

Material and methods

A total of 18 voucher specimens from Mauritius and Réunion and one photo from the citizen-scientific online platform iNaturalist were selected for the present study and are treated below. The specimens have been found in the beetle collections of the Natural History Museum Vienna (NHMW), the State Museum of Natural History Stuttgart (SMNS), and in the private collections of Andreas Link (now in the collection of the author, which is abbreviated as CIP), Jaroslav Dalihod (CJD), and Lukáš Bureš (CLB). Additional Reunionese comparative material (in CIP) of *P. marginalis* (1 ♂ from Piton Marmite) and *P. vittata vittata* (1 ♂ from Plaine des Palmistes in 1967) is not reported in detail below, because their data is already contained in CONSTANTIN (2016).

For the study of terminalia, two males were softened and their abdomina dissected with the methodology and equipment detailed in PLONSKI (2014). Labels are described and cited verbatim. Two stereo-microscopes were used: an Olympus SZX 10 during specimen handling and description, and a Nikon SMZ 1500 equipped with an ocular micrometer for taking measurements. Standard measurements have been recorded in thousandths of a millimetre, but are reported as rounded to the nearest hundredth. Colour terms have been determined with PACLT (1958). Terminology of surface sculpturing has been adopted from HARRIS (1979). Digital photographs of habitus and median lobe were made and edited with the same equipment and software as detailed in PLONSKI & HAVA (2020).

Abbreviations of standard measurements

- AL Antenna length (maximum length of antenna)
- EL Elytral length (maximum length of elytra, including the scutellum, measured along the suture in dorsal view)
- EW Elytral width (maximum width of elytra, measured in dorsal view)
- HW Head width (maximum width of head including eyes, measured in dorsal view)
- IOW Interocular width (minimum width of interspace between eyes, measured in dorsal view)
- PL Pronotal length (maximum length of pronotum, measured in dorsal view)

- PW Pronotal width (maximum width of pronotum, measured in dorsal view)
 SW Shoulder width (width of elytra across the shoulders, measured in dorsal view)
 TL Total length (measured from clypeus to tip of elytra in dorsal view).

Results

Pelecophora concinna VINSON, 1946 (Fig. 1)

Material examined. 1 ♀ (SMNS) labelled with “MAURITIUS: 14.1.[19]98. \ Black River Canyon N[ational] P[ark]. \ Chamarel, 370 m. \ det. [sic! = leg.] J. & I. Wiesner” [white paper, printed].

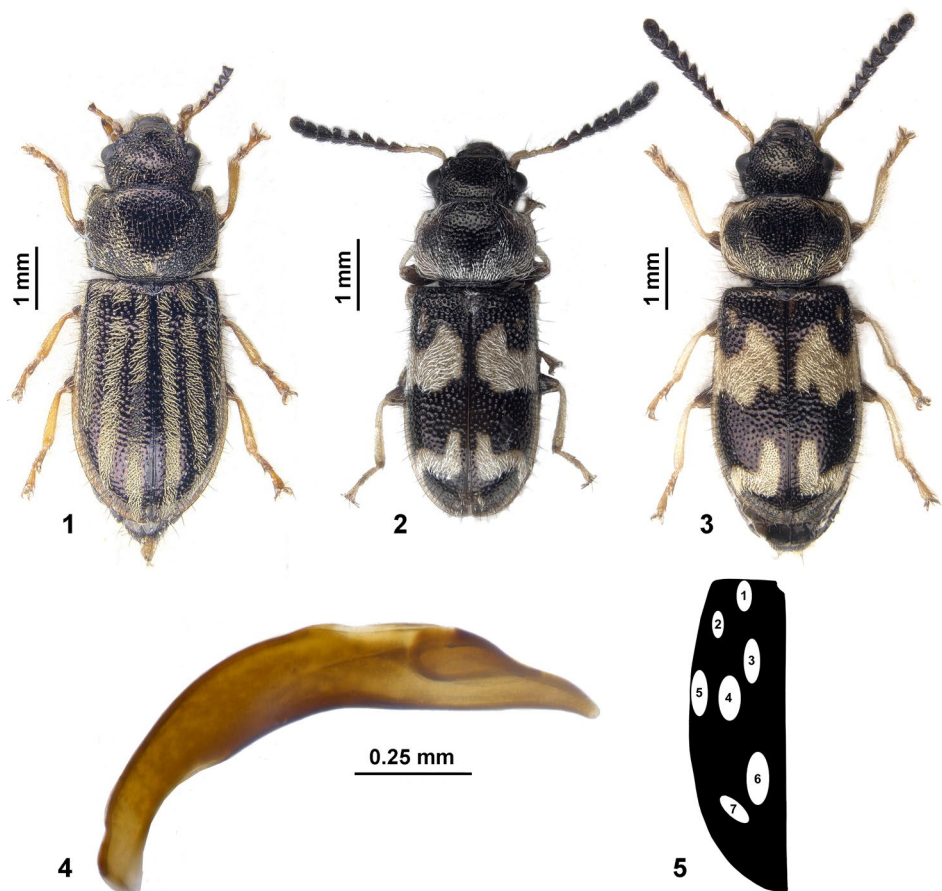
Supplementary description. Habitus of female as in Figure 1. Measurements of reported specimen: TL: 5.75 mm; AL: n/a; HW: 1.44 mm; IOW: 1.07 mm; PW: 2.00 mm; PL: 1.37 mm; EL: 3.44 mm; SW: 2.00 mm; EW: 2.16 mm. Structures: Head puncturation only on median vertex and frons “rather sparse” (VINSON 1946: 260), viz. with smooth interstices as long as one puncture’s diameter or radius; interstices further narrowed on lateral vertex and behind the eyes, where the surface structure becomes areolate-rugulose; and the puncturation at level of the antennal sockets and in front of the anteclypeus is composed of much smaller punctures with interstices up to 6.3 times as long as one puncture. Pronotum: surface sculpture on disc’s sides not “granulose” (VINSON 1946: 261), but rugulose-lacunose.

Pelecophora illigeri illigeri (GYLLENHAL, 1808) (Figs 2–4)

Material examined. Typical colour variant: 1 ♂ (CJD) labelled with “MAURITIUS \ Montagne Brise Fer \ 11.02.2015 \ Jaroslav DALIHOD lgt.” [white paper, printed]. – Colour variant with humeral maculae: 1 ♂ (CLB) labelled with “Mauritius S 2019 Chamarel \ Piton du Fougé, 611m, 20.1. \ 20.4522483S, 57.3588033E \ Leg. Lukáš Bureš, Weyrová” [white paper, printed], “*Pelecophora \ illigeri* (G.) [both lines handwritten] \ Det. Lukáš Bureš 2019 [printed]” [white paper]. – 1 ♀ (SMNS) labelled with “MAURITIUS: 14.1.[19]98. \ Black River Canyon N[ational] P[ark]. \ Chamarel, 370 m. \ det. [sic! = leg.] J. & I. Wiesner” [white paper, printed].

Redescription. Pubescence. Scape, pedicel and antennomere III beset with white and dark setae, antennomeres IV–XI densely beset with black setae; legs beset with short white setae; head capsule beset with short black reclinate setae and 4–6 long black erect setae behind the compound eyes; pronotal pubescence ternary: (1) short black reclinate setae on the dark coloured parts, (2) short white adpressed setae on the reddish coloured parts, which is denser in the posterior corners, and (3) much longer black erect setae occasionally present in the lateral thirds of pronotal width; scutellum beset with short white adpressed setae; elytral pubescence similar to the pronotal one: short reclinate intermixed with much longer erect black setae on the dark parts, and short adpressed white setae on the light parts.

Structures. Head capsule more slender than pronotum; compound eyes hemispherical in dorsal view, oblong in lateral view, with an indent at the anterior half; interocular furrows present as distinct grooves, each starting above posterior eye margins and running in a straight line towards antennal sockets, ending above them; cranial puncturation consists of deep punctures, whose interstices are broadest (as broad as one puncture’s diameter) medially, becoming narrower laterally, until reduced to fine ridges, where punctures become confluent into longitudinal rows subparallel to the interocular furrows;



Figs 1–5. (1) *Pelecophora concinna*, habitus of a female. (2, 3) *Pelecophora illigeri illigeri*, habitus of colour variant with humeral maculae, (2) male, (3) female. (4) *Pelecophora illigeri illigeri*, median lobe, lateral view. (5) Left elytron of a hypothetical member of the *P. illigeri* s.l. complex showing the basic pattern of maculation; 1 = basal macula, 2 = humeral macula, 3 = sutural macula, 4 = central macula, 5 = marginal macula, 6 = ental macula, 7 = ectal macula.

interstices per se smooth, only irregularly micro-sculptured in the space between eye margin, antennal sockets and interocular furrows. Antennae as illustrated by VINSON (1946: pl. X, fig. 2), with clavate scape, elongated pedicel, elongate conical antennomere III, serrate from antennomere IV onwards, each segment of antennomeres V–VIII a bit broader than preceding, antennomeres IX and X comparable in form, antennomere XI ovate. Pronotum transverse, ~1.5 times wider than long, broadest in the middle of length; base medially straight, then diverging towards hind corners, hind corners broadly rounded, sides subarcuate, front corners almost right-angled, apex almost straight; base and apex margined; pronotal disc convex except at front corners; disc's surface structure medially punctate with smooth interstices, and laterally rugulose-lacunose. Scutellum with short subparallel sides and broadly semicircular apex; surface structure puncticulate.

Elytra elongate, ~2.8 times longer than pronotum, and ~1.7 times longer than broad, subparallel, broadest just behind the level of hind coxae; side margin smooth and weakly explanate; epipleura broad, visible in lateral view, becoming obsolete at level of second visible abdominal sternite; disc's surface structure of two kinds: (1) on the dark coloured parts areolate in basal third, becoming foveolate in apical third, and (2) on the light coloured parts punctulate-reticulate; suture very finely margined. Legs: tibiae with a short tibial spur; tarsi shorter than tibiae; tarsomeres I–IV weakly lobed ventrally and of comparable size, tarsomere V large, as long as preceding four segments, broadest at apex; each claw with a large membranous unguis apodeme. Terminalia: abdomen with six visible segments; sternite VII normal; sternite VIII medially with a large transparent gibbous to transverse elliptical spot (= sternal fenestra); pygidium normal; spicular fork with large weakly sclerotized interspicular plate; tegmen as shaped as depicted in VINSON (1946: pl. X, figs. 3, 3a), viz. with distal end of phallobasis obovate, strong tegminal struts, and weakly sclerotized parameroid plate, which is incised at apex; median lobe as in Figure 4, shaped as depicted in VINSON (1946: pl. X, fig. 3).

Description of the new colour variant. Male. Habitus as in Figure 2. Measurements (n = 1): TL: 4.81 mm; AL: 2.09 mm; HW: 1.28 mm; IOW: 0.94 mm; PW: 1.56 mm; PL: 1.03 mm; EL: 2.88 mm; SW: 1.50 mm; EW: 1.72 mm. Colouration: head capsule black; antennae bicolorous (scape, pedicel, antennomere III and basal quarter of antennomere IV orange, remainder and antennomeres V–XI black); mouthparts bicolorous (mandibles and clypeus black; palpi orange, last maxillary palpomere partly infuscate); pronotum black, except side margins and corners reddish lightened, almost patterning a broad median longitudinal black stripe and a rounded black macula on each side of it; thorax, coxae, trochanters and femora chestnut brown to black; tibiae and tarsi orange; elytra black, except side margins orange and five yellowish cream-white markings on the disc (on each elytron) one tiny speck at the scutellum; one small round macula next to the humerus; a broad incurved stripe in the second third of elytral length, not reaching the suture but reaching the side margin; a thinner N-like curved stripe in the apical third of elytral length, not reaching the suture but reaching the side margin; a tiny subapical speck; abdomen black.

Female. Habitus as in Figure 3. Measurements (n = 1): TL: 5.63 mm; AL: 2.34 mm; HW: 1.41 mm; IOW: 1.03 mm; PW: 1.81 mm; PL: 1.25 mm; EL: 3.38 mm; SW: 1.84 mm; EW: 2.04 mm. Colouration: Largely as in the male described before, except central macula and overlap with sutural macula slightly smaller.

Discussion of the new colour variant. Structurally, the male does not differ much from the examined specimen of the typical variant. Observed differences are within the expected variability spectrum. Note that subspecies of the *P. illigeri* s.l. complex are diagnosed on the basis of chromatic characteristics: VINSON (1946) documented the genital-morphological similarity of *P. illigeri* and *P. cariei*, and took their eidonomic differences and contrasting distribution as a case of “climatic speciation”. Later, VINSON (1957) treated the aforementioned as subspecies and saw *P. i. barklyi* as an intermediate form. And PARNAUDEAU (2005), who studied type material and material ex coll. Jean Vinson, mentioned a genital-morphological similarity of *P. i. illigeri* and *P. i. deyrollei* and gave an identification key based solely on the differences in elytral maculation. However, the new colour variant cannot be classified at the subspecies level, because (1) there exists at least one population sample (4 ♂♂, 2 ♀♀ (in coll. R. Constantin, Saint-Lô, France) labelled with “Mauritius, Trois Mamelles [20°18'40" S, 57°27'00" E (6 km W of Curepipe)],

beating sheet, 6.II.1966, leg. Yves Gomy”) (R. Constantin in lit., emails with photos dated September 25th and October 3rd, 2024) consisting of specimens with or without humeral maculae and of specimens with intermediate colour pattern (viz. with lightened patch or indication of small humeral maculae), and because (2) there is no apparent geographical or ecological segregation.

Diagnosis of subspecific taxa. The complex of *P. illigeri* s.l. is well defined by its pattern of elytral maculation (Fig. 5): depending on geographical origin there are (I) up to five differently sized maculae (viz. basal, humeral, sutural, central, and marginal) in the basal half, which can be conjoined to patches or partly missing; and (II) two maculae (viz. ental and ectal) in the apical half, which are always conjoined, and forming a semi-annular stripe not reaching the margin or a falcular to angular stripe reaching the margin. The new colour variant reported herein is characterized by the possession of a humeral macula on each elytron, which is a character shared with *P. i. barklyi* VINSON, 1957 and *P. i. deyrollei* PARNAUDEAU, 2005. However, the new colour variant is most comparable to typical *P. i. illigeri* (GYLLENHAL, 1808) and *P. i. cariei* PIC, 1932, who both do not possess humeral maculae. *Pelecophora i. illigeri* is a form of the Northwest to Southwest Mauritian mountainous region – heretofore, only specimens without humeral maculae were reported (e.g. ALLUAUD 1898: fig. 2; PIC 1932: pl. 2, fig. 1; VINSON 1957: fig. 13). *Pelecophora i. cariei* PIC, 1932 is a form of the East Mauritian coastal plain region, and differs from *P. i. illigeri* in body size and shape, and chromatically foremost in having almost all (not the humeral) elytral maculae present and conjoined (VINSON 1957: fig. 10). *Pelecophora i. barklyi* VINSON, 1957 is a form confined to Round Island (over 22 km off-shore), and differs chromatically in having three light patches on the basal half of each elytron (VINSON 1957: figs 11, 12). *Pelecophora i. deyrollei* PARNAUDEAU, 2005 from Réunion differs chromatically in having five light patches (sometimes partly conjoined) on the basal half and one semi-annular stripe on the apical half of each elytron (PARNAUDEAU 2005: figs 1–2; cf. CONSTANTIN 2016: fig. on p. 318). The subspecies can be identified with the following key:

- 1 Base of elytra totally black and immaculate; sutural, central and marginal maculae of the basal half always conjoined to a transverse fascia reaching the elytral margin. 2
- Base of elytra maculate: basal macula present. 3
- 2 Humeral macula present. *P. illigeri illigeri*, new variant
- Without humeral macula. *P. illigeri illigeri*, typical
- 3 Humeral macula present. 4
- Humeral macula missing; basal, sutural, central, marginal, ental and ectal maculae are all conjoined; marginal and ectal maculae reach the elytral margin. *illigeri cariei*
- 4 Three patches in basal half, which are either the humeral macula plus the conjoined basal and sutural maculae plus the conjoined central and marginal maculae; or the basal macula plus the sutural maculae plus the conjoined humeral, central and marginal maculae; the ectal macula reaches the elytral margin. *P. illigeri barklyi*
- Five patches in basal half, which are the basal, humeral, sutural, central and marginal maculae – sometimes the last four are in contact; the ectal macula never reaches the elytral margin. *P. illigeri deyrollei*

***Pelecophora marginalis* FAIRMAIRE, 1880**

Material examined. 1 ♀ (NHMW) labelled with “Insel La Réunion \ Maido geg.[en] Grand \ Benard, lg. Franz” [white paper, printed]. – 1 ♀ (SMNS) labelled with “REUNION: Plaine des \ Palmistes, Ruderalfl[ur]. \ 1000m, 14.4.[19]95, ERBER” [white paper, printed]. – 1 ♀ (NHMW) labelled with “LA REUNION: 22-25.12.1998 \ SE St. Paul \ SE Petit France, 1800 m \ leg. Wewalka (2)” [white paper, printed]. – 1 ♀ (NHMW) labelled with “MAURITIUS \ Curepipe \ 17.10.2004 MADL” [white paper, handwritten]. – 1 ♀ (CIP) labelled with “Mauritius \ Domain de Chasseur \ 26.09.2007 (4067) \ leg.: Karin Link” [white paper, printed]. – 1 ♀ (CLB) labelled with “MAURITIUS S 2020 MUS \ Pit.[on] d.[e] l.[a] Pet.[ite] Rivière Noire \ 828 m, 28.1. \ Leg. L. Bureš, Weyrová” [white paper, printed]. – 1 ♀ (CLB) labelled with “MAURITIUS S 2020 MUS \ Mt. Cocotte 30.1., 780 m \ Leg. L. Bureš, Weyrová” [white paper, printed].

Observations. The Mauritian specimens from Curepipe and Domain de Chasseur fit the description of *P. obliquata* var. *charmoyi* ALLUAUD, 1898: the latter possesses the elytral colouration pattern depicted by VINSON (1946: pl. VIII, fig. 12), the former is a bit reduced in extent of the light patches. The Mauritian specimens from Piton de la Petite Rivière Noire and Mt. Cocotte possess the elytral colouration pattern depicted by VINSON (1946: pl. VIII, Fig. 11). The Reunionese specimens possess more or less the elytral colouration pattern depicted by VINSON (1946: pl. VIII, fig. 10).

Discussion. The hypodigm of *P. marginalis* FAIRMAIRE, 1880 sec. VINSON (1946) (= *P. obliquata* ALLUAUD, 1898) should be carefully revised and tested for a possible geographic segregation of the colour variants, because the “obvious (...) but long overlooked (...) islands-within-the-island-structure of Mauritius” (THÉBAUD et al. 2009) correlates with endemism (FLORENS 1999). VINSON (1946: 266) already tried to sort his material “into two geographical subspecies” each confined to either Mauritius or Réunion, because of genital-morphological differences (vide op. cit., pl. IX, figs 16b, 17b), but was “unable to do so”, because of “a few examples, from various [Mauritius] localities, which seem identical to Réunion examples”, and stated that “this (...) deserves more intensive investigation”. Furthermore, note that there are two names currently synonymized under *P. marginalis*, viz. *P. obliquata* and *P. o. var. charmoyi*. Regarding the latter, ALLUAUD (1898: 102) wrote: “L’insecte a un faciès tellement différent qu’on serait tenté d’en faire une espèce distincte [= The insect has such a different facies that one is tempted to make it a separate species]”. However, VINSON (1958) writes that *P. marginalis* is a very variable species with its elytral colouration pattern ranging from sharply defined to almost obsolete, and that Alluaud’s taxa are linked to Fairmaire’s taxon “by a perfect series of intermediate forms, all with identical male genitalia”.

***Pelecophora vittata interrupta* ALLUAUD, 1898**

Material examined. 1 ♀ (CIP) labelled with “Mauritius \ Black River N[ational]P[ark] St. Georges \ 30.09.2007 (4068) \ leg.: Andreas Link” [white paper, printed].

Observations. The specimen possesses the elytral colouration pattern depicted by VINSON (1946: pl. IX, fig. 7).

***Pelecophora vittata vittata* LAPORTE DE CASTELNAU, 1840**

Material examined. 4 ♀♀ (3 ♀♀ in SMNS; 1 ♀ in CIP) labelled with “REUNION: Plaine des \ Palmistes, Ruderalfl[ur]. \ 1000m, 14.4.[19]95, ERBER” [white paper, printed]. – 1 ♀ (SMNS) labelled with “REUNION, 30.XII.[19]97, \ Cilaos, 1340 m, \ det. [sic!, = leg.] J. & I. Wiesner”. – 1 ♀ (NHMW) labelled with “LA REUNION \ Cilaos, 1200 m \ 26.-30.12.1998 \ leg. Wewalka (8)” [white paper, printed].

Observations. The specimens look typical in colouration and uniform in morphology, except in one deviation: the outer longitudinal stripe on the left elytron of the specimen from Cilaos collected by G. Wewalka is not entire, but interrupted like in the Mauritian subspecies.

Pelecophora sp.

Note. Nicholas “Nick” Porch (Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia) photographed a specimen in the Grande Montagne National Park on Rodrigues Island on November 27th, 2016 (PORCH 2021). This photographic record depicts an undescribed form and represents the first occurrence record of a *Pelecophora* for Rodrigues Island.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Francois Benjamin Vincent Florens (University of Mauritius) for sending a copy of his unpublished master thesis. Lukáš Bureš (Brno, Czechia), Jaroslav Dalihod (Podbořany, Czechia), and Andreas Link (Ansfelden, Austria), who all made material available for study, are thanked for their trust. As well are Arnaud Faille and Wolfgang Schawaller (both SMNS), and Harald Schillhammer and Matthias Seidel (both NHMW), who lent out material under their care. Robert Constantin (Saint-Lô, France) and Andreas Link gifted the author with very helpful specimens in 2006 and 2008 respectively. Special thanks go to Alice Laciny (Vienna, Austria) for the linguistic revision of the submitted manuscript, and to Robert Constantin for the review of an earlier manuscript version.

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Author's address: Isidor S. PLONSKI,
 Rembrandtstraße 1/4, 1020 Vienna, Austria.
 Associate Researcher, Natural History Museum,
 2nd Zoological Department,
 Burgring 7, 1010 Vienna, Austria.
 E-mail: isidor.plonski@nhm-wien.ac.at

ZOBODAT - www.zobodat.at

Zoologisch-Botanische Datenbank/Zoological-Botanical Database

Digitale Literatur/Digital Literature

Zeitschrift/Journal: [Zeitschrift der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Österreichischer Entomologen](#)

Jahr/Year: 2024

Band/Volume: [76](#)

Autor(en)/Author(s): Plonski Isidor S.

Artikel/Article: [Notes on some taxa of Pelecophora Dejean, 1821 \(Coleoptera: Rhadalidae\) from the Mascarene archipelago 121-129](#)