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New Records of Gall-inducer and Inquiline Insects in a Few Mediterranean Countries, with Biological Notes

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ABSTRACT

An annotated list of some gall-inducing and inquiline insects found on herbaceous plants and trees in Italy and in other few Mediterranean countries is reported. Among the gall-inducer species, *Phanacis phoenixopodos* (Mayr, 1882) is new for the Italian peninsula, *Callirhytis rufescens* (Mayr, 1882), *Andricus quercusramuli* (L., 1761) and *Plagiotrochus amenti* Kieffer, 1901 (Cynipidae: Hymenoptera) are new for Sicily; the latter was previously cited from Italy without collecting data. *Oecocecis guyonella* Guenée, 1870 was found in Libya and *Amblypalpis olivierella* Ragonot, 1886 (Gelechiidae: Lepidoptera) in Jordan, Libya, Northern Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates. In addition, *Saphonecrus gallaepomiformis* (Boyer de Fonscolombe, 1832) (Cynipidae: Hymenoptera), a common inquiline of *P. amenti*, is new for Italy.

Key words: Gall-inducing insects, Hymenoptera Cynipidae, Lepidoptera Gelechiidae, biological cycle.

INTRODUCTION

Galls and their inducing insects represent probably one of the most fascinating entomological topics, because of their unique life history and the highly characteristic gall structure. In particular, Cynipidae (Hymenoptera) are the most rich gall inducing family in the world after Cecidomyiidae (Diptera) (Espírito-Santo and Wilson Fernandes, 2007) and include the most rich group of oak gallwasps (Cynipini) (Csóka *et al*. 2005; Abe *et al.,* 2007). Cynipini are characterized by heterogonic life cycles, with evident differences between galls from the asexual and amphigonic generations, involving in some cases also host alternation (Stone *et al*., 2002). They are often associated with many other insect species, both inquilines and parasitoids (Gómez *et al*., 2006). Among Lepidoptera, the two families Gelechiidae and Tortricidae are the richest of gall-inducing species (Miller, 2005). Many studies have been carried out on systematics, biology and ecology of oak gall wasps, while available information on lepidopteran gallers is considered still poor (Miller, 2005).

As regards Italy, current knowledge on gall morphology and gall-inducer species in Italy is based mainly on the impressive work of the entomologist Teodosio De Stefani Perez (1853-1935), who published several tens of papers between the end of nineteenth and the first half of twentieth century (Caleca and Mineo, 1988) and

of some botanists like Giacomo Cecconi (1866-1941), Caro Benigno Massalongo (1852-1928) and Alessandro Trotter (1874-1967). Only after many years, researches on galls and their inducers took a new interest, and several papers have been published reporting regional or local check lists and notes on biology and distribution of several species (Skuhrava and Skuhravy, 1994; Rizzo and Massa 1998; Skuhrava *et al*. 2001, 2002, 2007, Bella and Lo Verde, 2002; Brussino *et al*., 2002; Lo Verde, 2002; Pujade-Villar, 2005; Massa and Rizzo, 2006; Hellrigl, 2008, 2010; Nieves-ALdrey *et al*., 2008; Tomasi, 2012).

During recent studies of gall-inducing insects carried out in Italy and in some other Mediterranean countries, the occurrence of interesting species, both gall-inducer and inquiline, was recorded on herbaceous plants and trees. An annotated list of these species, belonging to Cynipidae (Hymenoptera) and Gelechiidae (Lepidoptera), with remarks on their distribution, a description of the galls and information about their biology, inquilines and parasitoids, is below reported.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Galls have been collected and kept in laboratory, where they have been maintained at room temperature until adults of gall-inducing insects or their parasitoids and inquilines emerged. All the insects were mounted and identified. For Cynipidae, the identification keys provided by Nieves Aldrey (2001), Melika (2006) and Pénzes *et al.* (2012) were used, while the identification of the two Gelechiidae is based on the descriptions of galls and adults reported in literature (Guenée, 1870; De Stefani Perez, 1906; Lupo and Gerling,1984). The parasitoids were identified using the identification keys provided by Bouček (1988), Nieves-Aldrey (1983), Pujade-Villar (1994), Doganlar (2011).

A series of images at different local planes has been taken for each discussed species, using a Nikon Coolpix 4500 digital camera or a Canon 350d or a Optikam microscopy digital USB camera, mounted on either a Optika SZR-10 or Optech EMX-210-2 stereomicroscope, and merged to obtain focused composite images using the freeware Combine ZP (Hadley, 2008). Measurements on mounted specimens were taken using the Optika Vision Pro software.

All collected specimens are preserved in the collection of Department of Agricultural and Forest Sciences, University of Palermo (Italy).

RESULTS

Five Cynipidae (Hymenoptera) species have been collected, of which three oak gall wasps new for Sicily, one galler of herbaceous plant and one oak gall wasp inquiline new for Italy. In addition, two Gelechiidae (Lepidoptera) have been found in Libya and other Mediterranean countries, from which they were not yet know.

GALL INDUCERS

HYMENOPTERA: CYNIPIDAE

***Phanacis phoenixopodos* (Mayr, 1882)**

Distribution: This species is known from the West Mediterranean, namely Morocco, southern France, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, Romania, Israel and Ukraine (Melika, 2006). In Italy it was known only from Sicily (Madonie: De Stefani Perez, 1905, 1912; Etna: Turrisi and Pagliano, 2004). The present is the first record for the Italian peninsula.

Material examined: Italy, Apulia, Villaggio Amendola (Foggia), 41°32‘51.49“N, 15°41‘17.12“E, on *Lactuca viminea*, 14.06.2007, B. Massa.

Remarks. Data on gall inducers in Italy, mainly on Cynipidae Aylacini species associated with herbaceous plants, are scarce and scattered, thus current absence of this species from Italian peninsula lists (Pagliano*,* 1995) is easily explained.

Cynipids of the tribe Aylacini include species of the genera *Phanacis* Foerster, 1860 and *Timaspis* Mayr, 1881, the latter synonymized with *Phanacis* by Eady and Quinlan (1963), resurrected by Nieves-Aldrey (1994), and again synonymized by Melika (2006). The group of “herb gall wasps” includes about 25 species, mostly distributed in the Palaearctic (Europe and Central Asia) (Nieves-Aldrey, 2001; Melika, 2006; Nieves-Aldrey *et al*., 2008), although recently a *Phanacis* species has been described from the Afrotropical region (Melika and Prinsloo, 2007). A few species have also been introduced with their host plants to several other countries (Nieves-Aldrey and Grez, 2007). They predominantly induce galls on plants of the Asteraceae family, including *Phanacis phoenixopodos* (Mayr, 1882) which induces galls on *Lactuca viminea* (L.) and *L. saligna* (L.).

P. phoenixopodos typically induces large galls of various shape (Fig. 1a) on stems of *L. viminea*, a latex-producing species. It is a univoltine species; in spring the female induces multilocular galls on the host plant. The number of larval chambers depends on the gall size; galls found in Apulia contained 5-12 chambers (Fig. 1b). Larvae grew inside them, pupated, and overwintered in the pupal stage (Figs. 1c, d) or as adults, which emerged from galls in late April and May.

***Callirhytis rufescens* (Mayr, 1882)**

Distribution: Mediterranean Basin, known from Iberian peninsula, France, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Ukraine and Turkey (Melika, 2006). The present is the first record for Sicily.

Material examined: Italy, Sicily, S. Maria del Bosco (Palermo), 37°41‘58.99“N, 13° 8‘51.38“E, on *Quercus pubescens* s.l., 18.07.2008, 23.07.2009, G. Cerasa; Italy, Sicily, Giuliana (Palermo), 37°40‘23.06“N, 13°13‘34.92“E, on *Q. pubescens* s.l., 01.09.2008, G. Cerasa; Italy, Sicily, Bisacquino loc. P. Cervi (Palermo), 37°43‘42.46“N, 13°16‘13.30“E, on *Q. pubescens* s.l., 01.10.2009, G. Cerasa; Italy, Sicily, Ficuzza (Palermo), 37°55‘13.35“N, 13°22‘40.05“E, on *Q. pubescens* s.l., 10.8.2009, G. Cerasa.

Remarks. Abundant populations of adults from the sexual generation were found in Sicily, where only the congeneric *Callirhytis glandium* (Giraud, 1859) was previously known. *Callirhytis rufescens* has also been described under the synonymis *C. vilarrubiae* Tavares, 1930 (sexual generation) and *C. glandulosa,* Weld, 1939 (asexual generation) (Nieves-Aldrey, 1992, 2001). Eggs from asexual generation

are laid in the spring under the bark of branches and new shoots, after which small, unilocular larval chambers develop (Fig. 2). Early galls do not cause any clear external deformation of the shoot; galls become visible at the end of June, when slight bumps can be noticed. Adults emerge from July through early September, leaving visible emergence holes on the bark (Fig. 2). The asexual generations of *C. rufescens* develop inside glands of *Q. suber*, *Q. cerris* and *Q. ilex*, where contiguous unilocular larval chambers are produced (Nieves-Aldrey, 2001). The cycle heteroecic was closed by Barbotin (in Nieves-Aldrey, 1992).

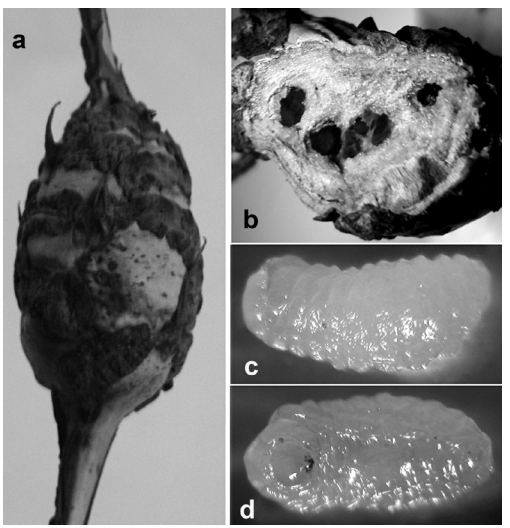

Fig. 1. *Phanacis phoenixopods*. a) gall induced on *Lactuca viminea*; b) gall opened to show larval chambers; c) dorsal view of pupa; d) ventral view of pupa.

Among the parasitoids obtained from collected galls, *Bootanomyia* sp. (Torymidae: Hymenoptera) was the most abundant (77% out of 69 emerged parasitoids), followed by *Eurytoma* sp. (16%); 2 specimens of *Sycophila binotata* (Eurytomidae: Hymenoptera) and *Eupelmus* sp. (Eupelmidae: Hymenoptera), and one Ichneumonidae were also reared. Parasitoids emerged mainly in December. The inquiline *Synergus tibialis* Hartig 1840 (Cynipidae: Hymenoptera) was also reared from these galls (20 females, 18 males). This species was already reported from Sicily as *S. erytrostomus* Hartig 1841 (Pagliano, 1995), that was synonymized by Pujade-Villar *et al*. (2003) with *S. tibialis.*

Andricus quercusramuli (L., 1761)

Distribution: This species is widespread in Central and Northern Europe (Nieves-Aldrey, 2001; Melika, 2006). In Italy the species has been recorded only from northern regions (Pagliano, 1995).

Material examined: Italy, Sicily, Giuliana (Palermo), 37°39'48.39"N, 13°14'5.98"E, on *Q. pubescens* s.l., 29.XII.2007, G. Cerasa; Italy, Sicily, S. Maria del Bosco (Palermo), 37°41'55.71"N, 13° 8'54.95"E, on *Q. pubescens* s.l., 26.IV.2008, G. Cerasa; Italy, Sicily, Ficuzza (Palermo) 06.V.2008, on *Q. pubescens* s.l., G. Cerasa; Italy, Sicily, Madonie loc. P. Pomieri (Palermo), 37°51'26.02"N, 14° 3'26.93"E, on *Q. pubescens* s.l., 06.VI.2008, B. Massa.

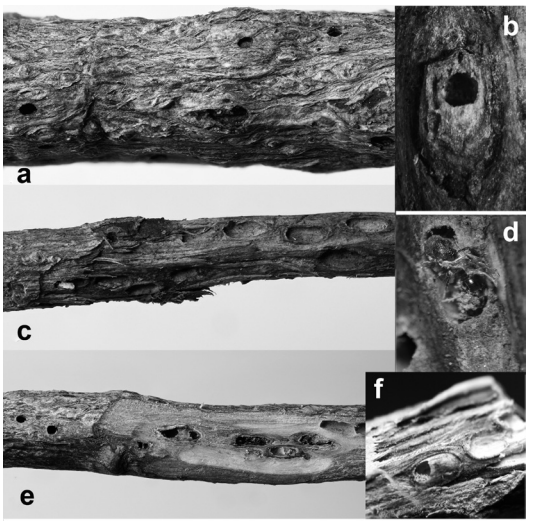

Fig. 2. Galls of the sexual form of *Callirhytis rufescens* on *Quercus pubescens* s.l. a) emergence holes; b) larval cell in situ; c) section of branch with old galls; d) larval cell occupied by a parasitoid; e) section of branch with new galls; f) bark cut to show the larval cell capsule-like.

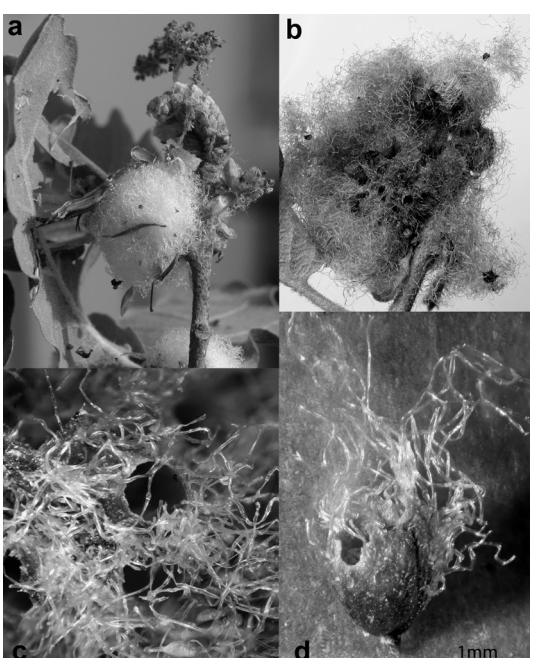

Fig. 3. Sexual generation galls of *Andricus quercusramuli*. a) cottony white galls induced on the male ament of *Quercus pubescens* s.l.; b) removal of cottony filaments shows plurilocular cells; c) and d) particular of the larval cell and of the short stalk that binds it to the ament.

Remarks. *Andricus quercusramuli* is characterized by alternating sexual and asexual generations. The correspondence between the asexual generation of *A. quercusramuli* and *Andricus autumnalis* Hartig, 1840 has been experimentally demonstrated by Adler (1881). *A. quercusramuli* is heterogonic.

The sexual generation galls are easily detected when just formed because of their cottony features and white color. Gall development on male aments of the host plant occurs from April on, and adults emerge in May-June. Galls have irregular shape and size, up to 2 cm wide. They are plurilocular, comprised of small, light brown cells that have an elliptical cross-section with a longer axis of about 2 mm. The pointed side of these small cells is joined to the ament by a short stalk (about 0.5 mm), while silk fibres present laterally on the cells give the cottony aspect to the entire gall, leaving the galled aments partially visible (Figs. 3a-d). The asexual generation, not found during the present study, develops within buds of *Q. pubescens* s.l., where ovoid galls, partially concealed within bud scales, are located (Melika, 2006).

***Plagiotrochus amenti* Kieffer, 1901**

Distribution: Mediterranean Basin: reported from Iberian Peninsula (Nieves-Aldrey, 1985, 2001), Corsica (Pujade-Villar *et al*., 2000), Switzerland (Bailey and Stange, 1996), Andorra (Ros-Farré and Pujade-Villar, 1998), and recently from Algeria (Benia *et al*., 2009) and Tunisia (Pujade-Villar *et al*., 2010). It has been introduced to California, USA (Weld, 1926) and Argentina (Díaz, 1973). *Plagiotrochus amenti* is generically known from Italy, but the collecting place and date are not reported (see Pujade-Villar *et al*., 2010).

Material examined: Italy, Sicily, Partinico loc. Mirto (Palermo), 38° 1‘23.58“N, 13° 8‘41.98“E, on *Quercus suber,* 29.II.2012, 07.III.2012, 14.III.2012, G. Cerasa.

Remarks. In Europe, the cycle is heterogonic and it was closed by Garbin *et al*. (2008). The sexual generation develops on *Q. suber* aments or annual branches, while the asexual generation on 2-3 year-old branches on the same host plant. Galls consist of a light swelling of the branch, usually difficult to detect before holes made by the emerging adult are present. Larval cells inside galls of the sexual generation are smaller than those of the asexual generation (about 0.7 x 2 mm and 1 x 3 mm, respectively) (Figs. 4a-h). Sexual generation galls develop from May-June, and adults emerge in the following weeks. Larvae of the asexual generation are visible in February, but adults do not emerge until the spring of the second or third year (Nieves-Aldrey, 2001).

In America only the asexual generation has been found, leading to suppose that an allopatric speciation process is currently ongoing (Garbin *et al*., 2008).

Recent observations carried out in Tunisia showed that the presence of larval chambers may result in yellowing of leaves and death of the branch (Pujade-Villar *et al*., 2010). The occurrence of heavy infestations in Argentina and USA (Zuparko, 1996; Diaz, 1973; Benia *et al*., 2009) and, more recently, in Spain (Pujade-Villar *et al*., 2010) suggest that monitoring and detection of this gall wasp is important in order to prevent future infestations that could damage both natural and production cork oak forests. In Tunisia *P. amenti* is considered abundant, but effectively controlled by its natural enemies (Pujade-Villar *et al.,* 2011).

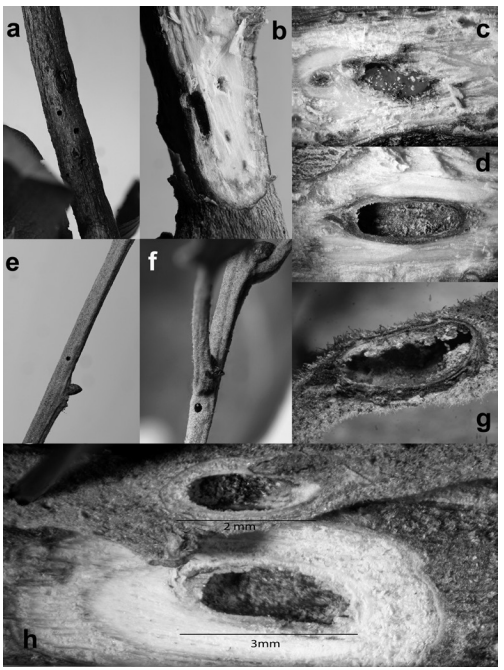

Fig. 4. Galls of *Plagiotrochus amenti* on *Q. suber*. a-d) asexual form. a) small branch with emergence holes; b) section of branch showing gall cells; c) the larva inside the cell; d) the shape of the cell; e-g) sexual form. e) branch of *Q. suber* attacked by the sexual generation of *P. amenti*; f) emergence hole; g) section of branch showing the shape of the cell inside the gall; h) comparison between the larval cells of asexual and sexual generations.

LEPIDOPTERA: GELECHIIDAE

Oecocecis guyonella Guenée, 1870

Distribution: This species was described based on material from Algeria by Guyon on *Limoniastrum guyonianum* Boisson (Giraud, 1869; Grissell, 1995), and later recorded in Mauritania, Cyprus, Syria, Tunisia (Houard, 1912) and Italy (Sicily: De Stefani Perez, 1906). De Stefani Perez (1906) recorded *Oecocecis guyonella* commonly on *Limoniastrum monopetalum* (L.), mainly in the islets in front of the Trapani coast, abundantly on the Is. Grande (= Is. Lunga) (Stagnone of Marsala). The presence of this species is newly recorded in Libya.

Material examined: Libya, Ptolemais (Cyrenaica), 32°42‘25.10“N, 20°57‘13.87“E, on *Limoniastrum monopetalum*, 24.IV.2005, B.Massa; Tunisia, outskirts of Kairouan, 35°41‘57.81“N, 10° 7‘8.70“E, on *Limoniastrum* sp., 27.I.2009, A. Troìa; Italy, Sicily, Is. Lunga (Trapani), 37°52‘37.51“N, 12°26‘43.07“E, on *L. monopetalum*, 17.I.2009, 20.VI.2009, 9.VII.2009, P.Lucido and B.Massa.

Remarks. Galls containing larvae of *Oecocecis guyonella* have been found in April. The reddish-brown galls are very hard and thick, and are round or ovoid and about 15 mm long. They are induced in April on the stems and at the base of flowers (Figs. 5a-c) and contain a single larva (Figs. 5d-f).

Before turning into chrysalid, the larva cuts a hole inside the gall wall (Figs. 6c) leaving only a very thin operculum (Figs. 6d), and then produces a white cocoon (Figs. 5g-i). After the adult (Fig. 6a) emerges from the gall; bits of the operculum remain attached to the surface, distinguishing galls from which *O. guyonella* emerged from parasitized galls - in the latter, the hole is slightly smaller and lacks the operculum (Fig. 6e). Mating occurs within 2-3 days after emerging and females lay many white striped eggs on the leaves of *L. monopetalum* (Fig. 6b). Because the new galls are induced in April, it seems evident that eggs overwinter on the leaves and larvae hatch in spring, as is the case for another gall-inducing Gelechiidae, *Amblypalpis olivierella,* Ragonot 1886 (Lupo and Gerling, 1984). Some galls collected in January lacked emergence holes; adults of *O. guyonella* and parasitoids emerged from them in October. Thus, not all chrysalids develop into adults in the same year, instead emerging from galls in the following year.

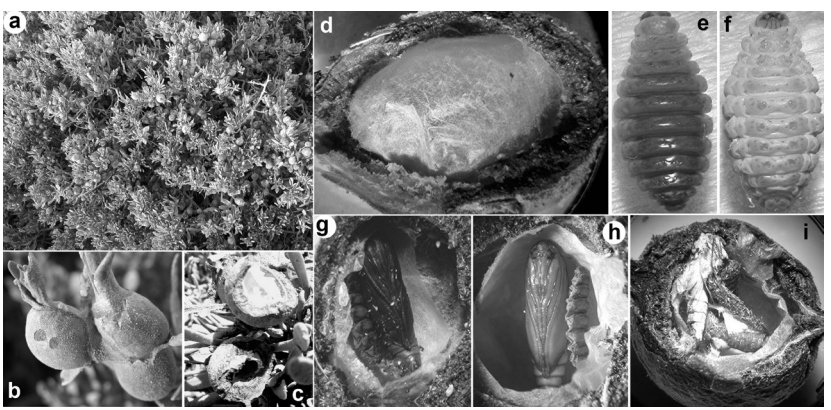

Fig. 5. *Oecocecis guyonella*. a) galls on *Limoniastrum monopetalum*; b) particular of galls induced on buds in spring; c) galls opened to show the larval cocoon; d) larval cocoon; e) and f) upper and lower side of larva; g) and h) nymphs within the cocoon; i) exuvia after emergence of the adult.

Overall, *O. guyonella* emerged from 54 (61.4%) out of the 88 galls collected in June and July (Figs. 6f g). Many of these galls were parasitised by the Braconidae *Rhaconotus ollivieri* (Giraud, 1869); the adults of the parasitoid were variable in size, although belonging to the same species (Mark Shaw, pers. comm.). On the whole, 360 *R. ollivieri* emerged (19 males, 31 females in May; 17 males and 101 females in July; 24 males and 41 females in August; 10 males and 106 females in September; 2 males and 9 females in October) with a clear predominance of females (80 %).

The emergence of some adults or their parasitoids in the second calendar year is known for some gall inducing insects, but it was not yet recorded for *O. guyonella*. We also examined a sample of 57 galls collected in January, of which 17 (30%) were parasitized, while from the remaining 40 galls (70%) adults of *O. guyonella* emerged.

De Stefani Perez (1906) found mature larvae inside the galls in June, chrysalids in August and adults emerging from galls in September-November. The same author also recorded *R. ollivieri* (cited as *Hormiopterus ollivieri*) from *O. guyonella*

abundantly between June and September, a little earlier than observed in this study. Other parasitoids obtained from *O. guyonella* collected in Algeria and described by Giraud (1869) are *Apanteles gallicolus* (Braconidae: Hymenoptera), *Microdontomerus albipes* (Torymidae: Hymenoptera), erroneously reported from France (Grissell, 1995), *Norbanus guyoni* (Giraud, 1869) (Pteromalidae: Hymenoptera), found also in Lybia (Rizzo and Mitroiu, 2010) and *Eupelmus gueneei* (Eupelmidae: Hymenoptera). Within old galls collected in January in Sicily (thus, induced in the previous year), spiders, ants and small beetles have been found; presumably they use galls as shelter or feed upon gall tissue.

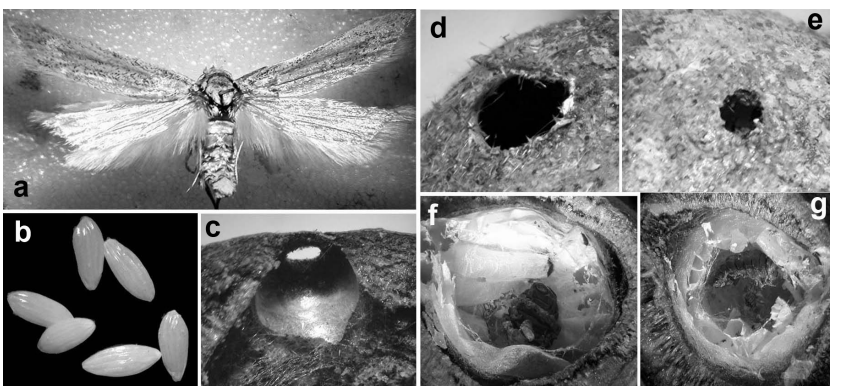

Fig. 6. *Oecocecis guyonella*. a) adult; b) white eggs; c) emergence hole from inside; d) outer view of emergence hole; e) emergence hole of the parasitoid *Rhaconotus ollivieri*; f) and g) exuviae of some *Rhaconotus ollivieri* inside the gall of *O. guyonella*.

Amblypalpis olivierella, Ragonot 1886

Distribution: Tunisia, Algeria, Sinai, Egypt (Houard, 1912), Israel (Bouček , 1982; Kugler, 1983), Iran, India (Gerling *et al.*, 1976), Pakistan (Bouček , 1982; Narendran, 1986). According to the present new records (Jordan, Libya, United Arab Emirates), *Amblypalpis olivierella* is widespread throughout the Mediterranean area and Arabian peninsula.

Material examined: Jordan, Azraq, 32° 1‘24.80“N, 36°25‘57.42“E, on *Tamarix* sp., 31.X.1999, B. Massa; Safi (South of Dead Sea), 31° 2‘24.47“N, 35°26‘40.51“E, 1.XI.1999 on *Tamarix* sp.; North of Dead Sea, 31°49‘58.79“N, 35°34‘59.12“E, 2.XI.1999, B.Massa; Libya, Zweila (Fezzan), 26°10‘46.73“N, 15° 5‘44.61“E, 19.IV.2005, B. Massa; Messa (Fezzan) 32°44‘37.27“N, 21°37‘11.99“E, 21.IV.2005; Um el Ma lake (Fezzan), 31°2‘50.48“N, 13°32‘52.44“E, on *Tamarix* sp., 23.IV.2005, B.Massa; N Yemen, Thula, 15°29‘39.51“N, 43°58‘35.16“E, on *Tamarix* sp., 3.IV.2008, B. Massa; United Arab Emirates, Al Ain, 24°19‘19.59“N, 55°50‘10.01“E, on *Tamarix* sp., 30.III.2010, F. Buzzetti.

Remarks. Galls induced by *Amblypalpis olivierella* (Fig. 7) have been collected on *Tamarix brachystylis* Gay and *T. bounopaea* Gay (Tunisia), on *T. articulata* Vahl (Algeria and Tunisia), *T. africana* Poiret (Sinai, Egypt and Algeria) (Houard, 1912). Empty galls on *Tamarix* sp. inhabited by the ant *Cardiocondyla wroughtoni* (Forel, 1890) (Formicidae: Hymenoptera) have been found in Israel (Kugler, 1983), while the parasitoid *Hockeria tamaricis* (Chalcididae: Hymenoptera) emerged from galls collected in Israel and Pakistan (Bouček, 1982).

INQUILINES

HYMENOPTERA: CYNIPIDAE

Saphonecrus gallaepomiformis (Boyer de Fonscolombe, 1832)

Distribution: Iberian Peninsula, France and Corsica (Pujade-Villar *et al*., 2000).

Material examined: Italy, Sicily, Partinico loc. Mirto (Palermo) 38° 1‘23.58“N, 13° 8‘41.98“E, on *Q. suber,* 29.II.2012, 07.III.2012, 14.III.2012 G. Cerasa, from galls of *Plagiotrochus amenti* (asexual generation). The present is the first record of this species for Italy.

Remarks. This species (Fig. 8), whose taxonomic position has been recently clarified by Pujade-Villar (2004), was identified based on characters reported by Nieves-Aldrey (2001), Melika *et al.* (2005) and Pénzes *et al.* (2012). It is a common inquiline of *Plagiotrochus* spp. and can be found in *P. amenti* asexual galls on *Q. suber* (Pujade-Villar and Ros-Farré, 1998). The present is the first record of this species for Italy.

Fig. 7. Gall of *Amblypalpis olivierella* on a small branch of *Tamarix* sp.

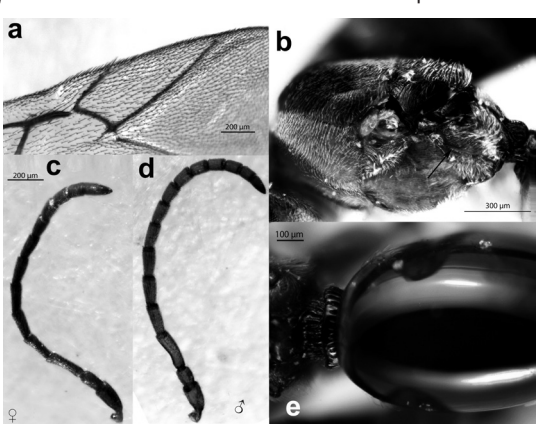

Fig. 8. *Saphonecrus gallaepomiformis*. a) radial cell of forewing (Rs vein does not reach wing border); b) metapleural sulcus reaching mesopleuron much higher; c) female antenna 13-segmented; d) male antenna 15-segmented; e) first metasomal tergite entirely sulcate, with strong longitudinal grooves.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank very much Mark Shaw, who identified the Braconidae that emerged from galls on *L. monopetalum*, Angelo Troìa and Filippo M. Buzzetti, for collecting some galls on *L. monopetalum* in Tunisia and on *Tamarix* in UAE, respectively.

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