

NOTA / NOTE

First records of *Mecinus comosus* Boheman, 1845 (Coleoptera, Curculionidae, Curculioninae, Mecinini) from France.Jens Prena¹ & Roberto Caldara²¹ e-mail: baridinae@gmx.de² e-mail: roberto.caldara@gmail.com

Abstract: *Mecinus comosus* Boheman, 1845 (Coleoptera, Curculionidae) is reported from southern France based on two collecting events. New information is provided about development, plant association and parasitoids.

Key words: Coleoptera, Curculionidae, *Mecinus comosus*, weevils, *Pteromalus*, parasitoid, *Plantago*, sea plantain, salt marsh, France.

Resumen: Primeras citas de *Mecinus comosus* Boheman, 1845 (Coleoptera, Curculionidae, Curculioninae, Mecinini) de Francia. Se cita *Mecinus comosus* Boheman, 1845 (Coleoptera, Curculionidae) a partir de dos colectas en el sur de Francia. Se aporta nueva información sobre su desarrollo, su asociación con su planta huésped y sus parasitoides.

Palabras clave: Coleoptera, Curculionidae, *Mecinus comosus*, gorgojos, *Pteromalus*, parasitoides, *Plantago*, llantén de mar, marisma, Francia.

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During a brief visit to a bird sanctuary at Étang de Berre, a brackish lagoon near Marseille in southern France, JP noticed sea plantain (*Plantago maritima* L.) with deformed flower spikes. Closer examination produced fully developed weevil specimens of the genus *Mecinus* Germar, 1821. A few spikes were taken and more specimens emerged over the next days. They keyed out readily to *Mecinus comosus* Boheman, 1845 in the recent revision by Caldara & Fogato (2013), i.e. to a species so far not recorded in France (Pelletier 2005; Caldara & Fogato 2013; J. Pelletier, pers. comm. June 2017). Another recently collected specimen from a site 155 km further west was located subsequently by RC in material of the Naturkundemuseum Erfurt, Germany (NMEG) and confirms the occurrence of the weevil in France.

Mecinus comosus belongs to the tribe Mecinini in Curculioninae. The species originally was described from Portugal and later reported from Spain, southern Italy (including Sicily and Sardinia) and western North Africa (Caldara 2013). When Caldara & Fogato (2013) included in *M. comosus* four synonyms, the known distribution extended further eastward to Albania, Greece and Turkey.

Mecinus comosus is one of the more conspicuous members of the genus, which otherwise comprises subgroups with morphologically rather similar species. The two chief distinguishing characters are elongate body shape in combination with a very short rostrum in both sexes. These two characters do not occur together in any of the other species. In France, the first character separates *M. comosus* from *Mecinus simus* (Mulsant & Rey, 1859) (also with a very short rostrum) and the second from *Mecinus circulator* (Marsham, 1802) and *Mecinus suturalis* Reitter, 1907 (also with oblong and at least partially reddish elytra). Photographic images and a key to all known species can be found in Caldara & Fogato (2013).

Life history data on *M. comosus* are scarce and so far were limited to mere sightings made on *Plantago macrorrhiza* Poir. in Morocco (Peyerimhoff 1912) and *P. maritima* in Spain (P. Sprick, cited by Caldara & Fogato 2013). Our specimens from Étang de Berre developed in the flower spike of *P. maritima*, thereby causing local distortions and swellings of the central axis (Fig. 1). Two or three specimens generally occupied a single spike; the larvae had tunnelled the central axis but did not eat into the peduncle underneath. Even though infestation rate of the plant and commonality of the beetle were not assessed, many plants showed obvious deformations and the weevil seemed fairly abundant locally. A single male specimen of *Pteromalus sequester* Walker, 1835 (Hymenoptera, Pteromalidae) emerged in mid June, ca. one week posterior to the weevils. The wasp has a rather broad host spectrum and is a known parasitoid of *Mecinus collaris* Germar, 1821 (Noyes 2017), a congener associated with the same plant.

Material examined: Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Bouches-du-Rhône, Saint-Chamas, 43.5221N 5.0453E, 7.-11.VI.2017, 6 specimens ex *Plantago maritima* (JP). Occitanie, Hérault, Lespignan, 43.1434N 03.0911E, 30.V.2014, leg. Apfel, 1 specimen (NMEG). The reared parasitoid kindly was identified by Mircea Mitroiu (Iasi, Romania) and is stored in his collection.

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Fig. 1. - Flower spikes of *Plantago maritima* with distortions caused by larvae of *Mecinus comosus*.