Rediscovery of *Gardena melinarthrum* Dohrn from Sri Lanka

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The foregoing paper by Hiremath et al. (2022) points out that even though *Gardena melinarthrum* Dohrn, 1860 was first described on the basis of an apterous specimen collected from Sri Lanka (= Ceylon), there were no details of the location; more important fact is that there is no subsequent record of this species from Sri Lanka since 1860.

We are now confirming the presence of *G. melinarthrum* from Sri Lanka, after a gap of over 150 years, from three different localities shown in the map (Image 2). We are only providing photographic evidence, as the specimen collection was not permitted. All observed individuals were macropterous.

All the individuals were photographed using Canon EOS 7D or Canon EOS 7D Mark ii camera, with a Canon EF 100 mm f/2.8 L IS USM macro Lens. The map was prepared using Las Palmas version of QGIS.

All the specimens observed were about 25 mm long and showed specific proportion of the various regions of the fore leg which are diagnostic: especially important key character showed by the specimens was that the basal spineless area of the fore femur was about one-third of the total length of the femur. Wygodzinsky (1966) additionally mentioned in the key that the basal spineless area is at least 10 times in length of the first femoral spine (including its basal tubercle). These characters are evident in the close up images provided here (Image 1c).

The first observation of *G. melinarthrum* on 28 January 2016, was in Puleliya, Anuradhapura District of Sri Lanka. It was photographed on outside wall of a village house, at around 1910 h, most probably attracted to the electric lights on the wall. The area surrounding the house was a typical home garden with some crops and wild vegetation (Image 1a).

Another individual was photographed when it was attracted to the lights, in a guest house situated in front of a man-made lake, on 02 October 2021, in Mahooya, Ampara District of Sri Lanka, at around 2030 h. It was actively flying towards the light (Image 1b).

Most recent sighting of this species was during a biodiversity assessment survey in Mannar District of Sri Lanka. Two individuals of *G. melinarthrum* were observed on 10 March 2022 in Andankulam at 1220 h. One individual was observed resting on a web of the spider *Parawixia dehaani* (Doleschall, 1859) and the other one was resting on a twig, few meters away, in nearby forest habitat.

Since most Emesinae tend to be nocturnal (Wygodzinsky 1966), the same can be assumed for
Rediscovery of Gardena melinarthrum from Sri Lanka

G. melinarthrum as well, since both these observed individuals in Andankulam did not move and appeared to be resting during day time, in a shaded area. The insect was actually observed flying towards light at night on two separate occasions.

A map showing three recorded locations is presented here (Image 2). All the recorded locations are from the dry zone of Sri Lanka. Based on that, we can assume that this species mostly inhabits dry mix evergreen forests, but we can’t say with conviction that this species is restricted to the dry zone. More targeted surveys are needed to confirm its range of distribution within Sri Lanka.

It is indeed heartening that such a delicate predatory bug is still present and is quite widely distributed in Sri Lanka. We did not observe any apterous form, may be because we did not look closely at the various undisturbed places that harbor spider webs. A search for such areas will be surely fruitful. This note is a kind of rediscovery of this interesting bug.
Rediscovery of *Gardena melinarthrum* from Sri Lanka

Ranasinghe & Ghate

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– Wirdatett, R. Taufiq P. Nugraha, Yulianto & Gono Semiadi, Pp. 21127–21139

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Feather characteristics of Common Myna Acridotheres tristis (Passeriformes: Sturnidae) from India
– Swapna Devi Ray, Goldin Quadros, Prateek Dey, Padmanabhan Pramod & Ram Pratap Singh, Pp. 21161–21169

Population and distribution of Wattled Crane Bugeranus carunculatus, Gmelin, 1899 at lake Tana area, Ethiopia
– Shimelis Aynalem Zelelew & George William Archibald, Pp. 21170–21178

Waterbird assemblage along Punatsangchu River, Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang, southern Western Ghats, India
– Aijaz Hassan Ganie, Tariq Ahmad Butt, Anzar Ahmad Khuroo, Nazima Rasool, Rameez Ahmad, Syed Basharat & Zafar A. Reshi, Pp. 21199–21212

Freshwater fishes of the Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, India
– P.S. Eldho & M.K. Sajeevan, Pp. 21213–21226

Butterflies of Eravikulam National Park and its environs in the Western Ghats of Kerala, India
– Kalesh Sadasivan, Tom’s Augustine, Edayillam Kunhikrishnan & Baiju Kochunaryan, Pp. 21199–21212

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– Tammaya Rani Sethy & Janak Ahl, Pp. 21227–21238

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– Lalremsanga, Pp. 21213–21226

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– Joel Jose & Jobi Xavier, Pp. 21246–21265

A checklist of herpetofauna of Telangana state, India
– Chelmalu Srinivasulu & Gandla Chethan Kumar, Pp. 21266–21281

Comments on “The Dragonflies and Damselflies (Odonata) of Kerala – Status and Distribution”
– A. Vivek Chandran & K. Muhamed Sherif, Pp. 21282–21284

Landings of IUCN Red Listed finfishes at Chetlat Island of Lakshadweep, southeastern Arabian Sea
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First report of the termite Glyptotermes ceylonicus (Blattodea: Isopter: Kalotermitidae) from India: an example of discontinuous distribution
– Edwin Joseph, Chinnu Ipe, Nisha P. Aravind, Sheery Antony & Jobin Mathew, Pp. 21290–21295

Authentic report of the emesine bug Gardena melinarthrum, 1860 (Hemiptera: Reduviidae) from India
– Sangamesh R. Hiremath, Santana Saikia & Hemant V. Ghate, Pp. 21296–21301

Reappearance of stomatopod Gonodactylus platysoma (Wood-Mason, 1895) after an era from the intertidal region of Chota Balu, South Andaman, India
– N. Muthu Mohammed Naha, Umaangnen Pongener & G. Padnavaati, Pp. 21302–21306

Range extension of earthworm Drawida impertusa Stephenson, 1920 (Clitellata: Moniligastroidea) in Karnataka, India
– Vivek Hasyagar, S. Prasanth Narayanan & K.S. Sreepada, Pp. 21307–21310

Pelotantheria insectifera (Rchb.f.) Ridl. (Orchidaceae): a new generic record for Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh, India
– V. Ashok Kumar, P. Janaki Rao, J. Prakasa Rao, S.B. Palad & C. Sudhakar Reddy, Pp. 21311–21314

New breeding site record of Oriental White Ibis Threskiornis melanocephalus (Aves: Threskiornithidae) at Thirunavaya wetlands, Kerala, India
– Binu Chullakattil, Pp. 21315–21317

Rediscovery of Gardena melinarthrum Dohrn from Sri Lanka
– Tharindu Ranasinghe & Hemant V. Ghate, Pp. 21318–21320

A report on the occurrence of the cicada Callogaeana festiva (Fabricius, 1803) (Insecta: Cicadidae) from Mizoram, India
– Khawhirong Marova, Fania Malawmdawngligna, Lal Muansanga & Hmar Tlawmte Lalremsanga, Pp. 21321–21323

New distribution records of two species of metallic ground beetles of the genus Chlaenius (Coleoptera: Carabidae: Chlaenini) from the Western Ghats, India
– Sangamesh R. Hiremath, Santana Saikia & Hemant V. Ghate, Pp. 21324–21326

Report of Euphaea pseudodispar Sadasivan & Bhakare, 2021 (Insecta: Odonata) from India
– Z. Karthikeyan, S. Srinivas & A. Vivek Chandran, Pp. 21327–21330