

Pyrrhocoris apterus (Linnaeus, 1758) - a new record of firebug (Hemiptera, Pyrrhocoridae) from Malta

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True bugs of the family Pyrrhocoridae, more commonly known as red bugs, cotton stainers or (in the case of *Pyrrhocoris apterus*) firebugs, are represented by 43 species from 13 genera in the Palaearctic (AUKEMA & RIEGER, 2001). The Heteroptera of the Maltese Islands have been relatively well-studied, with 141 species recorded (CUESTA SEGURA *et al.*, 2010; CARAPEZZA & MIFSUD, 2015; 2016). Of these, only one species belongs to the family Pyrrhocoridae - *Scantius aegyptius aegyptius*. However, specimens collected in summer of 2018 were confirmed to be *Pyrrhocoris apterus*, a new Pyrrhocorid record for Malta.

Pyrrhocoris apterus (Linnaeus, 1758)

Material examined: Malta, Haż-Żebbuġ, 20.vi.2018, leg. T. Cassar (1 macropterous); Rabat, Chadwick Lakes, 16.ix.2018, leg. T. Cassar (1 brachypterous); Rabat, Chadwick Lakes, 19.ix.2018, leg. T. Cassar (1 brachypterous).

Notes: *Pyrrhocoris apterus* has a predominantly Palaearctic distribution, being present from the Iberian Peninsula eastwards into Siberia and China, including most of central and southern Europe. In controlled conditions, eggs take seven and a half days to hatch (MATOLIN, 1973). *P. apterus* goes through five larval instars, the last of which lasts the longest – typically about seven days (RIZKI & SLÁMA, 1968). Adults can be either brachypterous or macropterous, though various intermediate morphs exist. Brachypters' wings are reduced to vestigial scales whilst macropterous individuals have well-developed pairs of wings which extend to the abdomen tip or past it (SEIDENSTÜCKER, 1953). *P. apterus* in Europe feed on the seeds of Linden (*Tilia* spp.) and other Malvaceae, as well as *Robinia pseudoacacia* (KRISTENOVÁ *et al.*, 2011). The species has been extensively used as an experimental model and many aspects of its life history, endocrine system and heredity have been studied in detail (SOCHA, 1993).

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