

# On the presence of *Bitoma siccana* (Pascoe, 1863) (Coleoptera: Zopheridae) in Malta

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**ABSTRACT.** *Bitoma siccana* is here recorded for the first time from Malta and it seems that the species is already well established. This constitutes the fourth record for Europe.

**KEY WORDS.** Mediterranean region, new record.

## INTRODUCTION

The cylindrical bark beetles (Coleoptera: Zopheridae) of the Maltese Islands were reviewed by SCHUH & MIFSUD (2000) with four species recorded of which *Langelandia nitocosta* was described as new to science. A second species of *Langelandia* which is probably also new to science was not described because additional material still needs to be collected. Recently, one of us (DM) was examining insect material collected by Mr Aldo Catania via UV light traps from his residence in Zebbug (Malta). Among the material collected, on two separate occasions an interesting species of Zopheridae was found which proved to be new for Malta and information on this species is here under reported.

### *Bitoma siccana* (Pascoe, 1863) (Fig. 1)

**Material examined.** MALTA: Żebbuġ, 23/30.viii.2020, 3 exs., leg. A. Catania

In the Palaearctic region, the genus *Bitoma* Herbst, 1793 is currently represented by four described species. Of these, only *B. crenata* (Fabricius, 1775) was previously recorded from Malta (CAMERON & CARUANA GATTO, 1907; SCHUH & MIFSUD, 2000). *Bitoma siccana* is native to the tropical areas of the Old World where it is widespread. In the Australasian Region it is distributed from India eastwards to Australia and New Caledonia reaching Nepal, China and Japan in the north. In Africa its distribution range reaches from the Cape Verde Islands through the whole sub-Saharan part of the continent to Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands. In North Africa this species is recorded from Algeria (Biskra), Egypt (Cairo, Maadi) and Yemen. It has also been introduced to America (USA, Central America and several Caribbean islands). From Europe, this species was reported from Italy on two separate occasions, once from Venice harbour (RATTI, 2002) from material collected in 1970 under bark of imported exotic trunks and more recently from southern Sardinia (CILLO & BAZZATO, 2011) where it was found under bark of *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. The material from Sardinia was found some 30 km inland and it was hypothesised that the species there is already well established.

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**Figure 1:** *Bitoma siccana* (Żebbuġ, Malta)

The species was also recently reported from France in the La Rochelle harbour (SOLDATI *et al.*, 2018).

The material from Malta was collected via UV light traps in Żebbuġ, which is an inland location, and is thus presumed that the species is also well established here. In its native countries, *Bitoma siccana* is usually the most common species of Zopheridae. It prefers rather dry and sun-exposed habitats. It is often encountered on or under the bark of logs on forest edges or also on timber far away from the original forest (R. Schuh., *pers. observation*). This fact facilitates the distribution and further introduction to several countries by timber commerce.

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