



## Short Communication

# RECORD OF PLEASING FUNGUS BEETLES (COLEOPTERA: EROTYLIDAE) FROM TRIPURA STATE, INDIA

### INTRODUCTION

The representatives of the coleopteran family Erotylidae are commonly known as “pleasing fungus beetles”. They are often elongate-elliptical to hemispherical or sub-orbicular in shape, moderately flattened and brightly patterned with red or yellow and black or seldom metallic blue color. They are primarily inhabitants of the humid forest areas where diverse fungi grow, necessarily mycophagous, feed mostly on surface of fungal fruiting bodies or occasionally feed inside them. Their larvae generally feed within the larger fruiting bodies of mushrooms and bracket fungi. In the background of habitat requirements and ecological needs the erotylids flourished considerably in humid forest areas in the tropical and subtropical parts of both the Old and New Worlds but diversified more in the eastern hemisphere. By now, about 60 species are known from India. However, occurrence of the erotylids in recent times has become less prevalent due to gradual loss of forests and woodlands. The NorthEast Indian (NEI) region that possesses rich evergreen and subtropical vegetations has been an important zone of rich beetle fauna of India. But the exploration and inventorisation of the beetle fauna of this region remained far from adequate. This is far more true for the erotylids with records of about 40 species till date. A large area still remained unexplored while primary vegetations and habitats have been depleted due to multitudes of factors. All these necessitated organized taxonomic study and documentation of the beetle fauna in an urgent manner. Recently, during a field work for collection of sap beetles and related groups in Tripura by one of the authors (J D) an example of erotylid beetles was found in the wood inhabiting fungi in a forested area. It forms the first record of this beetle family as there has been no earlier record of erotylid

beetle from Tripura State. A taxonomic account of the material is presented.

### SYSTEMATIC ACCOUNT

Family EROTYLIDAE

Subfamily DACNINAE

Genus *Episcapha* Lacordaire

*Episcapha septentrionis* Heller

1918. *Episcapha quadrimacula septentrionis* Heller, *Archiv. f. Nat.*, **84**: 68.

1925. *Episcapha septentrionis*: Arrow, *Fauna Brit. India, Coleoptera, Clavicornia*: 41.

General appearance (Text Figs. 1, 2) elongate-ovoid, subdepressed, covered with fine velvety pubescence, blackish body and elytra patterned with two pairs of transverse bands - on both anterior and posterior halves.



Fig. 1. *Episcapha septentrionis* Heller, Dorsal view.

Head broader than long, front margin truncate; eyes large and finely faceted, separated dorsally by less than thrice their width, puncturation on dorsal side not prominent but surface dull due to dense pubescence; antennal insertions widely separated, antenna moderately long and slender, scape moderately large and broadly elongate, pedicel shorter and narrower than scape, segments 3-7 subequal, progressively slightly wider and little elongate, 8 about as broad as long, 3-segmented club rather compact with segments more or less transverse.



Fig. 2. *Episcapha septentrionis* Heller, Ventral view.

Prothorax transverse (1.0:1.5), widest slightly above base, moderately narrowed anteriorly, sides arcuate, front margin distinctly emarginated, front angles produced; lateral margin thickly carinate, a small elongate pit on either extremity of carina, base bisinuate with broad median lobe, no prebasal impression, hind angles nearly right angle, no visible punctations through dense pubescence on pronotum. Scutellum transverse, pubescent, apical margin angulate.

Elytra broadly elongate (1.3:1.0), slightly wider than prothorax at base, sides gently arcuate and widest little above middle, elytral apex rounded, no punctations visible through dense pubescence; each elytron decorated with two large reddish-yellow transverse spots, first one situated little

below base behind humeral angle, extending from slightly away of side margin to well before sutural line and extending anteriorly a narrower elongated branch towards basal border, second one slightly narrower than first one and situated behind middle, its hind border somewhat arcuate, not touching side margin and suture of elytra, spots somewhat irregular in outlines but more or less clearly delineated.

Ventral surface less pubescent, apical margin of prosternal process emarginated, meso- and metasternum less pubescent and impunctate, abdominal ventrites a little more pubescent than metasternum.

Length- 12.7 mm.

*Material examined:* 1 ex. INDIA: Tripura, W. Tripura Dist., Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary, 21.iii.2012, J. Dasgupta, ex. under bark.

*Distribution :* INDIA: Tripura (New record), Meghalaya, Assam, Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar islands; VIETNAM, TAIWAN, CHINA.

*Comments :* This species shows certain resemblance with *E. xanthopustulata* Gorham but can be distinguished by the yellowish spots on elytra somewhat narrower and vertex of head devoid of any orange spot.

#### REMARKS

The beetle fauna of specialized habitats in rain-fed forest zones have been continuously under increasing anthropogenic pressures and many of the species are seen less frequently in these days. The present species has not been found after the record by Arrow in 1925. It has therefore, been urgent to take up coordinated field explorations and taxonomic study of various beetle groups from the NEI for a better knowledge of the fauna of this biodiversity-rich region.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to Dr. K. Venkataraman, Director, Zoological Survey of India for providing necessary facilities to carry out the work and Dr. Kailash Chandra, Additional Director, Entomology Division A for encouragement. Sri Debashish Chakraborty, Conservator of Forests, Tripura and the officers of

the Forest Department extended generous support in carrying out field works in Tripura State to JD are also duly acknowledged. We are thankful to Dr. T.K. Pal, ZSI for confirming the identity of the erotylid beetle.

#### SUMMARY

The erotylid species, *Episcapha septentrionis* Heller recorded from the Tripura State forms the first report of the Erotylidae from this Indian state.

#### REFERENCE

ARROW, G. J. 1925. *The Fauna of British India, including Ceylon and Burma; Coleoptera, Clavicornia (Erotylidae, Languriidae and Endomychidae)* xv+416 pp., 1 pl., 1 map; Taylor & Francis, London.

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