**FIRST REPORT OF GONIPTERUS SCUTELLATUS COMPLEX (COLEOPTERA CURCULIONIDAE) IN SICILY (ITALY)**

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During August 2015, the weevil Gonipterus scutellatus complex (Coleoptera Curculionidae), a pest of Eucalyptus spp., was found for the first time in Sicily. According to our surveys, Eucalyptus globulus was the only infested tree species.

**KEY WORDS:** Eucalyptus globulus, Eucalyptus snout beetle, invasive insect.

In August 2015, in Sicily, during entomological surveys, we found several damaged leaves of Eucalyptus globulus Labill. The signs of defoliation were distinctive of both adults and larvae of Gonipterus scutellatus complex (Coleoptera: Curculionidae); larvae eat only on leaves' surface, leaving characteristic tracks, while adults chew the leaf edges giving them a ragged, scalloped appearance (Fig. 1).

The two infested individuals of E. globulus are located exactly in Piedimonte Etneo (Catania) (37°48.818' N 15°11.079' E, 700 m a.s.l.) from May to September 2015, but signs of defoliation had been visible since 2012.

Results from a web research showed that pictures of adults were also present in Forum Natura Mediterraneo (http://www.naturamediterraneo.com), reporting September 2009 as data of collection and Niscemi (Caltanissetta) as locality, but these findings have never been verified by experts.

The collective name Gonipterus scutellatus has often been used for the Eucalyptus snout beetle in the past, but it is known today that this name represents a species complex: there are indeed several cryptic species and its systematic is still under review (Mapondera et al., 2012). The Eucalyptus snout beetle is an Australian native species that feeds on a wide range of host trees, belonging mainly to the genus Eucalyptus (reviewed in Bouwer et al., 2014). This invasive beetle spread across other eucalypt-growing countries, including North and South America, New Zealand, China, South and East Africa and in Europe was found in Italy, France, Portugal and Spain (OEPP/EPPO, 2005). In Italy the species was firstly detected in Liguria and then in Latium (Arzone and Meotto, 1978; Maltezz and Colonnelli, 1994; Abbazzi and Maggini, 2009). In 2012, the species was found in Montecristo Island, in the Tuscan Archipelago (Mazza et al., 2012) and further surveys confirmed the presence in several localities across Tuscany (Inghilesi et al., 2013a, b). Until now, the damages were registered always on E. globulus leaves and only in two cases, the weevil was found on E. bicostata Maiden, Blakely & Simmons and on an undefined species (probably a hybrid between E. camaldulensis Dehnh. and E. rudis Endl.) (Inghilesi et al., 2013a; Newete et al., 2011). The Eucalyptus camaldulensis trees, notwithstanding the proximity with E. globulus, have been never damaged, confirming the host specificity of this beetle (reviewed in Bouwer et al., 2014).

The eucalyptus plantations have a long history in Italy. In particular, in Sicily, 35,000 hectares of eucalyptus wood were implanted at the end of the last century (La Mantia, 2013). Eucalyptus camaldulensis is one of the most common species, in the continental Italy as in the whole world (FAO, 1979). Only few other species of Eucalyptus are present in Sicily and few represented, as in the case of E. globulus. Eucalyptus globulus has been reported as one of the most heavily damaged hosts for Gonipterus spp. (reviewed in Bouwer et al., 2014), and so host availability is one of the main factors influencing the presence of this beetle. The low presence of this Eucalyptus species could justify the delay in the discovery of Gonipterus scutellatus complex in Sicily, besides the few studies on community of insects hosted by these trees (e.g. Romano and Carapezza, 1975; Longo et al., 1993; Bella and Lo Verde, 2002; Maltezz and Sciscaro, 2007). Further studies are necessary to assess the actual distribution in this region and the impacts on other Eucalyptus species, in particular on the recently introduced ornamental ones, such as E. gunnii Hook. f. At present, notwithstanding the Gonipterus scutellatus is reported as an EPPO A2 qua-
rantine pest of Eucalyptus spp. (OEPP/EPPO, 2005), this weevil does not seem to be a threat for the Sicilian eucalyptus trees.

REFERENCES


Fig. 1 – Gonipterus scutellatus complex: 1. Larva; 2. Typical leaf damage caused by larvae.