

A rearing record of *Triaspis podlussanyi* Papp (Hymenoptera: Braconidae, Brachistinae), new to Britain

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ABSTRACT

Over a period of more than two years a large number of female specimens (but no males) of *Triaspis podlussanyi* Papp were reared evidently as a parasitoid of the ptinid beetle *Gastrallus knizeki* Zahradník developing in *Viscum album* L. at Windsor Forest, England.

Keywords: Parasitism, *Gastrallus knizeki*, *Viscum album*, thelytoky, England

ADDITION TO THE BRITISH LIST

The greater parts of three somewhat broken mistletoe (*Viscum album* L.) crowns that had been blown from *Tilia* canopy were collected by HM on 10.ii.2013 in Windsor Forest, Berkshire, SU9373 and, with a c. 25cm length of the host branch, placed in an emergence trap (cf. Mendel & Hatton, 2014). From these a large number of a species of a brachstine braconid in the genus *Triaspis* emerged in the following periods: vii–viii.2013, about 18; vii–x.2014, about 20; 5.vii–17.viii.2015, 47; and 17.viii–21.x.2015, six. All examples were female. *Triaspis* species are koinobiont endoparasitoids of Coleoptera larvae (Shaw & Huddleston, 1991) and the overwhelming majority (more than 500 specimens) of the adult beetles that emerged from the *Viscum* stem and twigs were *Gastrallus knizeki* Zahradník (Ptinidae), a species that has only recently been recorded from Britain (Mendel & Hatton, 2012; 2014), and this was clearly the host. Other beetles to emerge were in much smaller numbers: about 50 *Pogonocherus hispidus* (L.) (Cerambycidae), fewer than ten *Salpingus planirostris* (Fabricius) (Salpingidae), and less than five of each of *Dasytes aeratus* Stephens (Dasytidae), *Leiopus nebulosus* (L.) (Cerambycidae) and *Anobium punctatum* (De Geer) (Ptinidae); it is considered extremely unlikely that any of these species were serving as host.

When the first crop of *Triaspis* that emerged in 2014 were sent to MRS he was unable to determine them and sent some to CvA who recognised them as the little-known species *Triaspis podlussanyi* Papp, which was originally described (with figures) from Hungary and Germany (Papp, 1998) but for which no host was known. It is here recorded from Britain for the first time. The species is in fact rather easy to recognise, having a yellowish brown subcubic head (eye in dorsal view 0.8 times as long as the temple, which is longer than usual for *Triaspis* species). Additional features are: clypeus about 2.5 times as wide as high, but not reaching level of the inner side of the eyes; OOL about equal to POL; third metasomal tergite of female not emarginate medio-posteriorly; metasoma in ventral view slender oval and the setose part of the ovipositor sheath 0.8–0.9 times as long as fore wing and about 1.3

times metasoma; frons nearly smooth and perpendicularly depressed near stemmaticum; and mesosoma yellowish brown. It is very similar to *T. graeca* Papp, 2003, but the latter has slightly fewer antennal articles (19 versus 23–25) and the clypeus is straight medio-ventrally (variable even in the type series of *T. podlussanyi*).

Specimens are deposited in NMS Edinburgh, BMNH London and RMNH Leiden.

DISCUSSION

The host association seems beyond doubt, not only because the other species of beetle reared were in small numbers but also because they are all common species that have often been reared under other circumstances, without parasitism by *T. podlussanyi* having been noted.

As all of the c. 90 examples of *T. podlussanyi* seen from this rearing are females, it is clear that the species is thelytokous. It is less clear that they (and indeed the reared examples of the presumed host *G. knizeki*) had all been present in the *Viscum* at the time of its collection. At least some of the 2015 emergences seem likely to indicate that breeding, perhaps by both parties as most *Triaspis* species are believed to oviposit into the egg stage of the host, had continued in the substrate after its collection. Alternatively, emergence occurring in the second and third summers after the substrate was collected could indicate a prolonged development time, which might explain the paucity of emergence of *Triaspis* in 2013 if the substrate had only recently been colonised by the host. Of course, these possibilities are not mutually exclusive.

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