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ON THE LITTLE KNOWN GENUS ORECTIS LEDERER, 1857
(LEPIDOPTERA, NOCTUIDAE)*

NOTE REVISIONALI SUL GENERE ORECTIS LEDERER, 1857
(LEPIDOPTERA, NOCTUIDAE)

Abstract - Following a critical reappraisal of the literature and the examination of material referable to the relevant nominal taxa, two synonymies within the genus Orectis Lederer, 1857, are established: Orectis proboscidata (Herrich-Schäffer, [1851]) (= Orectis barteli Turati, 1907, nov. syn.) and Orectis massiliensis (Millière, 1864) sp. rev. (= Orectis euprepiata Dannehl, 1933, nov. syn.).

Key words: Synonyms, Orectis, Lepidoptera Noctuidae.

Riassunto breve - L’esame di materiale di tutti i taxa nominali descritti nel genere Orectis Lederer, 1857, ed una revisione critica della relativa letteratura permettono di stabilire le seguenti sinonimie: Orectis proboscidata (Herrich-Schäffer, [1851]) (= Orectis barteli Turati, 1907, nov. syn.) e Orectis massiliensis (Millière, 1864) sp. rev. (= Orectis euprepiata Dannehl, 1933, nov. syn.).

Parole chiave: Sinonimie, Orectis, Lepidoptera Noctuidae.

Introduction

In the Mediterranean genus Orectis Lederer, 1857, only three species are currently recognized, namely O. proboscidata (Herrich-Schäffer, [1851]) (= massiliensis Millière, 1864), O. barteli Turati, 1907 and O. euprepiata Dannehl, 1933 (cf. Poole, 1989; Berio, 1991; Fibiger & Hacker, 1991). Nevertheless, it is fairly clear that on some nominal taxa there are misconceptions due to the particular paucity of the available material. In fact, Fibiger & Hacker (1991) recently raised the question whether barteli from Sicily (Etna region), known only on a few males (Berio, 1991), is nothing but a melanic form of proboscidata.

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Following the examination of adequate material referable to all the nominal taxa, a substantially different arrangement of the species-group names within the genus is here suggested.

**On the identity of *Orectis barteli* Turati, 1907**

*Turati* (1907) described *Orectis barteli* on the basis of three male specimens from Serra Pizzuta (Sicily), a lateral peak of the volcano Etna. According to *Turati* (1919), the remarkable melanism of *barteli* allows an easy separation from the closely similar *proboscicida* (cf. *Draudt*, 1936). Moreover, the author provided a detailed description which, as *Berio*’s description (1991), only depicts individual features which are unconstant and hence of little use for diagnostic purposes. In fact, the examination of a larger toptotypical series from Etna (14 ♂♂, 1 ♀, in Museo di Zoologia dell’Università di Roma) reveals at what extent the pigment deposition pattern and the wing-markings of *barteli* can vary (fig. 1).

The colour differences between *barteli* and *proboscicida* are, admittedly, striking. Nevertheless, for any lepidopterist with some experience on Sicilian Heterocera the existence on Etna of melanic populations, better camouflaging on the lavic rocks, is a well-known phenomenon (“adjustment to background”, cf. *Ford*, 1972). In fact, a large number of species shows on Etna phenotypes much darker than in the rest of Sicily and Europe (e.g. phenotypes “*hyphoea*” *Turati*, 1909, of *Anomoconia senex* (*Geyer*, [1827-1828]); “enceladaea” of *Polymixis rufocincta* (*Geyer*, [1827-1828]), “satanas” *Boursin*, 1940, of *Autopila cataphanes* (*Hübner*, [1813]).

The occurrence of “*barteli*” only on Etna and of normal *proboscicida* elsewhere in Sicily (*Guenée*, in *Millière*, 1873; *Failla Tedaldi*, 1890; *Turati*, 1919; 4 ♂♂. *Ficuzza*, in coll. *Turati*, Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali, Torino) (fig. 1) strongly corroborates *Fischer & Hacker*’s (1991) hypothesis of *barteli* as a melanic form of *proboscicida*. Interestingly, 4 of 5 specimens of *proboscicida* from Kula Liums, Albania (in Naturhistorisches Museum, Wien) are distinctly melanic and closely similar to the specimens from Etna.

On a morphological basis, *Berio* (1991: 510) states in a diagnostic key that *barteli* does not exceed the wingspan of 18 mm while *proboscicida* would be well over 20 mm. However, in the systematic section *barteli* is credited by *Berio* himself (1991: 512) of wingspan values of 21-22 mm. As a major diagnostic character *Berio* (1991: 510) also indicates the absence in *proboscicida* of the clasper.

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*Fig. 1 - Orectis proboscicida* (*Herrich-Schäffer*, [1851]). Sicily (lines 1-4: “*barteli*” phenotypes, Etna; line 5: normal phenotypes, Ficuzza).
both of them but also that there are minor differences in the male genitalia (figs 3-4). Unfortunately, only one female specimen of barteli has seemingly ever been collected, this specimen showing distinct anomalies in the sclerotization of the abdominal tergites. Nevertheless, the genitalic pieces are well preserved and correspond with those of proboscidata (figs. 6-7).

There is therefore evidence that specific status should not be conferred to the populations from Etna, which are hence synonymised with the nominate form: *Helia proboscidata Herrich-Schäffer, [1851] = Orectis barteli Turati, 1907 nov. syn.*

The type series of barteli was composed as follows (Turati, 1907): Serra Pizzuta (Etna) (prov. Catania), 15.X.1906, 1 ♂, 18.X.1906, 2 ♂♂. The material currently preserved in coll. Turati (Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali, Torino) is as follows: Nicolosi, 5.V.1, 1 ♀, Krüger Geol.; idem, 20.VI.187, 1 ♂, coll. Krüger, mus. Turati E. [Det. Berio *O. barteli Tur.,* Cotypus]; Catania, 1 ♀. The specimen collected in Nicolosi on 20.VI.1907 cannot be considered a *cotype* as suggested by Berio since it was not used for the description (cf. Turati, 1907: 36, footnote). Seemingly, the only existing specimen belonging to the type series of barteli is the lectotype male ([Serra Pizzuta] Nicolosi, 18.X.1906) designated and figured by Berio (1991).

*Orectis proboscidata* is an at least double-brooded species ranging from the central to the eastern Mediterranean region. In Italy it is decisely rare and with a spotted distribution, except for the north-eastern sector where it is more evenly present. Particularly, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia it occurs quite regularly, as it becomes a characteristic species of the Karst Lepidopteran fauna.

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**On the identity of Orectis massiliensis (Millière, 1864)**

In his description of "Nudaria (?) Massiliensis", based on one single specimen from the surroundings of Marseille, Millière ([1864]a, 1864b) emphasized several characters of the new taxon, the diagnostic value of which can be nowadays fully appreciated. Forewing markings like the outstanding costal spots in correspondence with the transverse lines, the dot-like reniform stigma, the postmedial line deeply curving inwards below the discal cell, and the sharp dots of the antennal margin line on both wings, are all features not characteristic of proboscidata (fig. 2). These and other characters were later substantiated by Guenée (in Millière, 1873) who compared further material of *massiliensis* from Cannes with *proboscidata*. Nevertheless, *massiliensis* has been usually considered as a synonym of *proboscidata* (e.g. Staudinger & Rebel, 1901; Warren, 1913-1914; Lhomme, 1923-1935; Leraut,
Figs. 3-5 - Male genitalia of Orectis spp.: O. proboscidata (HERRICH-SCHÄFFER, [1851]), (3) Alto Adige, (4) Sicily, Etna (“barbati” phenotype); (5) O. massiliensis (MILLIÈRE, 1864), Tuscany.


Figs. 6-8 - Female genitalia of Orectis spp.: O. proboscidata (HERRICH-SCHÄFFER, [1851]), (6) Lazio, (7) Etna “barbati” phenotype; (8) O. massiliensis (MILLIÈRE, 1864), Toscana.

1980; POOLE, 1989; FIBIGER & HACKER, 1991), despite the fact that it was at least three times clearly re-evaluated (TURATI, 1919; PUNGELEI, in DRAUDT, 1936; BANG-HAAS, 1937). TURATI (1919) examined one specimen from the surroundings of Ventimiglia (West Liguria) (fig. 2), whereas it is unclear whether or not the opinion by PUNGELEI reported by DRAUDT (1936) has been published elsewhere by that author (cf. HELLER, 1927). DRAUDT (1936) and BERIO (1991) also put forward the suggestion of the conspecificity of massiliensis with euprepia Alldef. 1933, long since considered to be endemic of a restricted area in central Italy (DANNEH, 1927, 1933; PROVERA, 1978; BERIO, 1991). As a matter of fact euprepia is more widely distributed than previously known, occurring also in the northern Apennines and Peloponnese (HACKER, 1985, 1989; Bertaccini, pers. comm.; Zilli, unpublished).

After the comparison of the ligurian specimen in coll. Turati and toptopotypical material of euprepia (including two syntypes) with the iconotype of massiliensis by MILLERI (1864a, 1864b, cf. also 1873), it can be concluded that they belong to the same species. Accordingly, the following synonymy is established: Nadaria massiliensis MILLERI, 1864 sp. rev. = Orectis euprepia DANNEH, 1933 nov. syn.

Likely, all the records of Orectis proboscidata (HEHRICH-SCHAFER, [1851]) from southern France (e.g. Lhomm, 1923-1935) should be referred to Orectis massiliensis (MILLERI, 1864) which appears therefore as a Mediterranean xero-thermophilous species. Nevertheless, northern records like the one from Royan (Atlantic coast) (cf. Lhomm, 1923-1935) cannot be properly interpreted and require further analysis to ascertain whether or not proboscidata actually belongs to the French fauna. The specimen illustrated by LERAUT (1992) under the name proboscidata is well characteristic of massiliensis.

Little is known about the biomics of massiliensis (cf. BERCE, 1878), however from the scanty data available it seems a multi-brooded species living along river and stream valleys in xero-thermophilous Mediterranean areas.

The male genitalia of massiliensis are little differentiated from those of proboscidata. Nevertheless, the apex of valva, which in Orectis species consists of a rounded inferior lobe and a thin superior one, shows differences in the relative length of the two lobes. In fact, the inferior lobe of massiliensis (fig. 5) is decisively more projecting distally than the lobe of proboscidata (figs 3-4). In massiliensis the valva is also progressively tapering toward the distal end, while in proboscidata it appears more uniformly wide. In the female of massiliensis the bursa consists of a bag-shaped corpus (fig. 8), while in proboscidata the corpus bursae is piriform (figs. 6-7).


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