

24. OCCURRENCE OF *LEPTOCORISA ACUTA* FABR. (COREIDAE, HEMIPTERA) AS A PEST OF NUTMEG TREES

Large swarms of the rice earhead bug *Leptocorisa acuta* Fabr. adults were recorded on the nutmeg trees (*Myristica fragrans* Houtt.) in mixed plantations around newly transplanted rice fields in parts of Kalady in the Ernakulam District of the State of Kerala, during September-October, 1976. The population consisted exclusively of adults and the concentration per leaf ranged from 15-40. The maximum concentration was found on tender foliage. In the absence of paddy crop in the susceptible stage, the nutmeg trees were very much preferred for adult congregation, possibly due to the dense leaf canopy of nutmeg trees which provide good shelter and due to the favourable micro climate in the irrigated plantations characterised by relatively high humidity.

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The bugs which were comparatively inactive, fed on tender foliage causing minute slightly diffused yellowish-brown spots around the feeding punctures. This is the first record of *L. acuta* as a pest of nutmeg trees.

Foliar symptoms were reproduced when the bugs were confined in cages containing excised shoots. The mature leaves and fruits of varying degrees of development were not preferred for feeding. Though the bugs were present in large populations, the damage inflicted to the trees was found to be negligible.

*L. acuta* has been recorded on non-graminaceous alternate host crops such as mango (Sen 1961), Guava (Puttarudriah 1961), rubber (Green 1914 and Puttarudriah 1961) and tea (Corbett 1933).

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## 25. OCCURRENCE OF PEARL OYSTERS IN RATNAGIRI DISTRICT

In the Indian region pearl oysters exist in the Gulf of Mannar and in the Gulf of kutch. The following six species of pearl oysters have been reported (Rao 1970, Rao and Rao 1974).

1. *Pinctada fucata* (Gould), 2. *Pinctada margaritifera* (Linnaeus), 3. *Pinctada chemnitzii* (Philippi), 4. *Pinctada*

*sugillata* (Reeve), 5. *Pinctada anomioides* (Reeve) and 6. *Pinctada atropurpurea* (Dunker).

Of these, *Pinctada fucata* is commercially most important species supporting a lucrative fishery in both the regions producing the 'Oriental pearls' or 'Lingah pearls'.



In the month of August, 1976 immediately after a storm, a number of pearl oysters were washed ashore on the Malvan beach. It was reported that at least over a thousand oysters were washed ashore which were subsequently picked up by local people for eating. A subsequent visit to the place yielded 27 shells of pearl oysters belonging to the species *Pinctada chemnitzii* (Philippi).

*Pinctada chemnitzii* was described by Philippi (1849) from the China sea and Prashad & Bhaduri (1933) first recorded its occurrence

on the Indian coast. Along the Indian coast, the species is known to occur (Rao 1970) in Tranquebar, Madras Harbour, Tuticorin pearl beds in the Gulf of Mannar, in Palk Bay and off Balasore coast (Orissa). The Malvan Collection is the first record of this species from West Coast of India. Besides India, it has been recorded from Ceylon, Aden, Mergui Archipelago, Penang, Indonesian group of islands, Australia, Hong Kong, Philippines, China sea and Japan.

I am thankful to Dr. Alagarwami for kindly confirming the identity of the species.

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## 26. OCCURRENCE OF PEARLS IN THE INDIAN BACKWATER OYSTER *CRASSOSTREA MADRASENSIS* (PRESTON)

Although 22 species of marine bivalves are known to produce pearls (Bolman 1941; Alexander 1951; Cooke 1959; Alagarwamy 1965), formation of pearls in edible oysters appears to be rare. About 40 species of edible oysters occur in different parts of the world, but the only instance of pearl formation reported so far is in the European oyster *Ostrea edulis* (Bolman, loc. cit). This note reports the occurrence of pearls in the Indian backwater oyster, *Crassostrea madrasensis* (Preston).

During the course of an investigation on the biology of *C. madrasensis* from the Mulki estuary, South Kanara, three specimens of oysters were observed to have tiny pearls lodged in pearl sacs formed in the mantle. In the first specimen, 99 mm shell height, collected on 20-1-1976, a black pearl, 1 mm in diameter, was found in the pearl sac situated at the ventral edge of the right lobe of the mantle. The pearl sac was completely closed. The pearl was more or less spherical and non-lustrous. A second specimen, 150 mm shell





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