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Trichopoda pennipes (Fabricius, 1781) - a new tachinid fly (Diptera) for Malta

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Tachinidae is a diverse, cosmopolitan family of true flies currently with approximately 8,600 described species (O'HARA, 2013). Of these, about 900 have been found in Europe (PAPE *et al.*, 2015) and 61 species have been recorded for the Maltese archipelago (EBEJER, 2011). Tachinid larvae develop as endoparasitoids of other insects, although occasional records on other arthropods are also known (STIREMAN *et al.*, 2006; CERRETTI *et al.*, 2014). Four subfamilies are traditionally recognised, namely: Dexiinae, Exoristinae, Phasiinae and Tachininae. With the exception of a few species belonging to one tribe (Strongygastrini), the Phasiinae are composed of species which attack true bugs (Heteroptera). The North American native *Trichopoda pennipes* is a parasitoid of Pentatomidae (Stink bugs) and Coreidae (Leaf-footed bugs) such as the green stink bug (*Chinavia hilaris*), the squash bug (*Anasa tristis*), the cactus coreid (*Chelinidea vittiger*) and *Leptoglossus* spp. (ARNAUD, 1978). It is also known to parasitise the southern green stink bug (*Nezara viridula*) a species also known from the Maltese archipelago. The present note is to provide some information on *Trichopoda pennipes* which is here recorded for the first time from the Maltese Islands based on photographs taken by one of us (AD).

Trichopoda pennipes (Fabricius, 1781)

(Fig. 1)

Material examined: Malta, Sananard (limits of Zabbar), 29.viii.2016, 1 ♂, A. Darmanin.

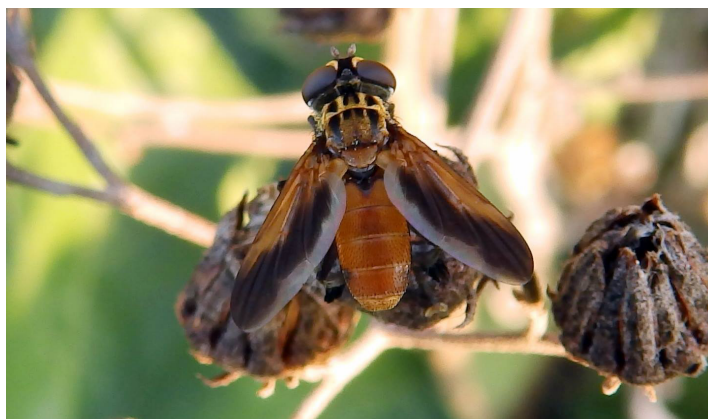


Figure 1: *Trichopoda pennipes* – habitus photograph.

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Trichopoda pennipes was first recorded in Europe (Italy) by COLAZZA *et al.* (1996) based on a record from 1989. Later, based on a specimen collected in Tuscany and preserved at Museum La Specola in Florence, TSCHORSNIG *et al.* (2012) moved back the date of the arrival of *T. pennipes* to 1983. However, soon after its arrival, *T. pennipes* rapidly spread throughout Italy (Campania, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Lazio, Umbria, Veneto, Sardinia and Sicily) (COLAZZA & BIN, 1990; GIANGIULIANI *et al.*, 1994; SALERNO *et al.*, 2002; CERRETTI *et al.*, 2004; CERRETTI, 2010; CARGNUS *et al.*, 2011). In other parts of Europe, it has been recorded in Portugal, Spain, France, Holland and Slovenia (TSCHORSNIG *et al.*, 2012).

The reproductive strategy and the life cycle of this fly is well known, because of its effectiveness in natural pest control systems. The adult female lays one to several plano-convex, non-incubated eggs on a large nymph or adult bug. Eventually, however, only one larva survives per host. The larva bores its way into the bug and feeds on its body fluids for about two weeks. The larva eventually kills the bug and emerges from the posterior abdominal segments. The third instar of *T. pennipes* then drops to the ground and pupates in the soil. An adult fly emerges about two weeks later.

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