

On the occurrence of two subspecies of *Hypsopygia costalis* in Malta (Lepidoptera, Pyralidae)

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Hypsopygia costalis (Fabricius, 1775), has been recorded for the Maltese islands from two specimens collected by one of us (AS) on May 16 and June 7, 1998 from Naxxar (SAMMUT, 2000) and seems to represent a rare species. These two specimens proved to belong to the nominal subspecies. During the European moth nights organised between the 25th and 29th August 2011, the first two authors each collected a specimen of *H. costalis syriaca* (Zerny, 1914). Additional material of this subspecies was collected by light traps on August 27, 2011 (1 female by AS) from Naxxar and the following night (1 male by AC) from Żebbuġ. Another specimen was collected from Mellieħa by H. Borg-Barthet on August 25, 2008.

Hypsopygia costalis is a rather small moth with a wingspan of 14-22mm and lives mainly in houses, barns, hedges, and where straw and hay are stored. The caterpillar of this moth is injurious to moist clover hay. It is found in the lower parts of haystacks, where affected hay becomes filled with webbings of the caterpillars and their excrement, often rendering it unfit for feeding. Its spreading can be prevented by keeping the hay dry and well ventilated. In the natural habitats larvae may also be found in squirrel and bird nests and in forest steppe and edges. The female is sometimes of a lighter colour than the male. It is a common taxon found in North Africa, West Asia, Amurland, North and South America. It is widespread throughout Europe except the northernmost part (SLAMKA, 2006).

The shape of the yellow costal spot is variable in the nominal subspecies. The subspecies *syriaca* is smaller and the yellowish blotches at the costa of forewings are narrower and have a triangular shape (Fig.1). The subspecies *syriaca* was described from Cyprus and Syria (SLAMKA, 2006) and was now found in Malta.



Fig. 1: *Hypsopygia costalis syriaca*

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