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Rhagonycha fulva (Scopoli), a new record of soldier beetle (Coleoptera, Cantharidae) from Malta

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Beetles of the family Cantharidae, commonly known as soldier beetles, are represented by 2,298 species and subspecies in the Palaearctic Region (KAZANTSEV & BRANCUCCI, 2007). ŠVIHLA & MIFSUD (2006) provided a check-list of six species of Cantharidae inhabiting the Maltese Islands, of which one species of *Malthodes* was not identified to species level. Three further species, namely *Rhagonycha* (*Rhagonycha*) *maculicollis* Märkel, 1852, *R. (R.) nigratarsis* Brullè, 1832 and *Cordicantharis longicollis* Kiesenwetter, 1859 were recorded as occurring in Malta by KAZANTSEV & BRANCUCCI (2007). A specimen of *Rhagonycha* collected in Spring 2014 was confirmed to be a new record for Malta. The genus *Rhagonycha* is subdivided in three subgenera, *Rhagonycha* with 258 taxa, *Spartiolepta* with two Algerian species and *Ussurycha* with one species occurring in Far Eastern Russia (KAZANTSEV & BRANCUCCI, 2007).

Rhagonycha (*Rhagonycha*) *fulva* (Scopoli, 1763)

Material examined: Malta, Qormi, 26.iv.2014, 1 ♂, leg. T. Cassar

Notes: *Rhagonycha fulva* is widespread in Europe and occurs also in Asia (Iran, Syria and Turkmenistan) and North Africa (Morocco). In Italy, the species is also recorded from Sardinia and Sicily. *Rhagonycha fulva* eggs are laid in summer, soon after which the larvae hatch. Members of this genus can go through 8–10 larval instar stages and pupation occurs late in the following spring in the soil. The larvae are ground-dwelling and usually live amongst leaf-litter or in soil during winter, feeding on other arthropods (FITTON, 1975). Adults are mostly active during daylight hours, occurring on flowering trees and shrubs. Although they are carnivorous, adults of *R. fulva* may feed on nectar, pollen or foliage. In fact, these beetles can be found on flowers where they can be observed feeding both on the flowers' substances as well as preying on the insect pollinators which visit.

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