

First report of the Pyriform scale from Malta (Hemiptera, Coccoidea, Coccidae)

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The Pyriform scale, *Protopulvinaria pyriformis* (Cockerell, 1894) represents a serious pest of fruit trees and ornamental plants in many parts of the world. In fact it is a polyphagous insect with over 100 plant hosts belonging to 34 families. Females of this scale are known to reproduce parthenogenetically with males occurring in the population at very low levels. The entire life cycle is spent on the lower leaf surface and it is estimated that the fecundity of the scale reaches 200 eggs per female. The Pyriform scale is probably native to South East Asia (Oriental Region) but is now widely distributed in warmer areas of Palaearctic, Afrotropical, Nearctic and Neotropical regions. It has also invaded many islands as documented in the ScaleNet project (BEN-DOV *et al.*, 2004). The species was first reported from the Mediterranean Region in Spain (DEL RIVERO, 1966) and later it was found in Israel, Italy, France, Greece (including Crete), and Portugal. The present work is intended to demonstrate for the first time the presence of this insect in Malta.

Protopulvinaria pyriformis (Cockerell, 1894)

(Fig. 1)

Material examined. MALTA: Msida, Tal-Qroqq (University grounds) 28.ix.2011, on *Laurus nobilis*, leg. D. Mifsud; Żejtun (primary school grounds), 15.x.2011, on *Laurus nobilis*, leg. D. Mifsud.



Fig. 1: Infestation of *Protopulvinaria pyriformis*

In the two mentioned localities where this insect was found in Malta, high population densities were observed, sometimes with more than 30 insects present on a single bay laurel leaf. Few individuals were also observed on the upper part of the leaf surface. Both trees were completely covered by sooty mould as a result of the abundant honeydew produced by the insect. The two locations where this scale was found, are relatively far away from each other when compared to the entire area of Malta. Therefore, most likely this scale has been in Malta for several years and it is more widely distributed in the archipelago than currently known.

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