



<http://dx.doi.org/10.11646/zootaxa.3626.2.6>

<http://zoobank.org/urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:FA4964A8-5C7E-4316-A00D-C121909301E0>

Recent records of scythridids from the islands of Socotra and Maldives in the Indian Ocean, with descriptions of two new species (Lepidoptera: Gelechioidea, Scythrididae)

KARI NUPPONEN¹ & AIDAS SALDAITIS²

¹*Merenneidontie 19 D, FIN-02320 Espoo, Finland. E-mail: kari.nupponen@kolumbus.fi*

²*Nature Research Centre, Akademijos 2, LT-08412 Vilnius-21, Lithuania. E-mail: saldrasa@gmail.com*

Abstract

Records of five species embracing 211 specimens of the family Scythrididae from the islands of Socotra and Maldives in the Indian Ocean are presented. The material was collected during four trips in 2008–2010 on Socotra, and in December 2011 on the Maldives. Two new species are described: *Scythris digitibasella* Nupponen & Saldaitis **sp. nov.** from Socotra and *S. atollicola* Nupponen, Saldaitis & Fischer **sp. nov.** from the Maldives. *Catascythris kebirella* Amsel, 1935 and *Scythris paralogella* Bengtsson, 2002 are reported as new to Socotra. The known distributional range of each species is given.

Key words: Islands of the Indian Ocean, Socotra, Maldives, Scythrididae, recent records, new species

Introduction

Socotra, which lies 240 km east of the Horn of Africa and 380 km south of the Arabian Peninsula, is a well-known source of material for biogeography and evolutionary research—a living laboratory with a high degree of endemism. The archipelago consists of four islands with Socotra (130 kilometres in length and 30–40 kilometres in width) comprising 95% of the archipelago's land mass. Socotra, regarded as one of the most alien-looking places on earth, has three main geographical features: (1) narrow coastal plains; (2) a limestone plateau extending across most of the island with karst caves, deep valleys and steep escarpments from 300 to 700 m; and (3) the Haghier Mountains in the centre of the island, which rise to 1,519 m (Miller and Cope 1996).

The fauna of Socotra Archipelago is composed of tropical-subtropical arboreal and eremic elements derived from African, Asian or South-Arabian and endemic origins (Wranik 1999). It is generally suggested that the endemic plants and animals are relicts and descendants of ancient flora and fauna, which have survived since the Mesozoic era (Miller and Cope 1996, Wranik 1999). Socotra was explored by both English (Hampson 1903) and Austrian (Rebel 1907) natural history expeditions just before the turn of the 20th century, but it remained effectively inaccessible during the 1900s due to its geographic isolation, extreme natural conditions and military concerns.

To date, about 250 species of Lepidoptera are reported from Socotra in the literature, including Rhopalocera (30 spp.; Hacker 1999), Noctuidae (102 spp.; Hacker and Saldaitis 2010, 2011), Pyralidae (>40 spp.; Hacker 1999), Geometridae (28 spp.; Hausmann 2009), Cossidae (5 spp.; Borth et al. 2011), and about 50 additional species from less studied families. Rebel (1907) suggested that 1/3 of the Lepidoptera fauna of the Socotra Archipelago is endemic, with a dominance of Afrotropical relationships. Until now, only three species of Scythrididae have been known from Socotra: *Scythris denticolor* Walsingham, 1900, *S. neurogramma* Walsingham, 1900 and *S. pectinicornis* Walsingham, 1900 (Bengtsson 2002).

The Maldives consist of 1,192 coral islands grouped in a double chain of 26 atolls, along the north-south direction, spread over roughly 90,000 square kilometres, making this one of the world's most dispersed countries. It lies between latitudes 1°S and 8°N, and longitudes 72° and 74°E. The atolls are composed of live coral reefs and