

Ophiusa tirhaca Cramer (Noctuidae: Lepidoptera) infesting pistachio trees in Israel

by Menachem J. Berlinger, Shoshana Yathom and Josef Halperin

Abstract: *Ophiusa (Anua) tirhaca* moths were trapped by mercury vapour light traps, throughout the year in most parts of the country, with a peak in July-August. There are three overlapping generations per year. The larvae occasionally cause severe damage to leaves of young pistachio trees; they are difficult to detect during the day, being closely attached to the branches and resembling them in shape and colour.

Kurzfassung: Die Motte *Ophiusa (Anua) tirhaca* wurde in Lichtfallen, die mit Quecksilberdampflampen bestückt waren, das ganze Jahr über in allen Teilen des Landes gefangen, mit einem Peak im Juli und August. Es gibt pro Jahr drei überlappende Generationen. Die Larven verursachen gelegentlich ernste Schäden an den Blättern von jungen Pistazien-Bäumen; die Larven sind schwierig zu entdecken, da sie eng an die Zweige angelehnt sind und diesen in Form und Farbe ähneln.

Key words: *Ophiusa (Anua) tirhaca*, Noctuidae, *Pistacia*, *Rhus*, *Myrtus*, light traps, biology, phenology.

Ophiusa (Anua) tirhaca Cramer, 1777 is of palaeotropic origin. The adult is 25 mm long with a wingspan of 60 mm. The front wing is olive green in colour with a light brown area at the lateral edge. The hind wing is yellow (Fig. 1). The larvae are greyish-brown in colour, 70–80 mm long when fully grown (Fig. 2). *O. tirhaca* was first recorded from Israel by BODENHEIMER (1937) as *Pseudophia tirhaca*. The larvae are polyphagous, feeding on a variety of broad leaf trees and shrubs (BROWN 1968). In Israel, feeding of *O. tirhaca* has been recorded on *Pistacia* spp. (HALPERIN 1985) and *Rhus tripartita* (HALPERIN 1991–1992). There are three overlapping generations, and the larvae may be found throughout the year.

During the years 1959–1990 *O. tirhaca* was trapped in light traps. The source of light was a 250 watt mercury vapour bulb placed over a funnel, above which a fan was installed to blow the hovering moths into a container. The traps were emptied every morning. The traps were located at various sites throughout Israel as follows (numbers in parentheses indicate metres above sea level): Dan – Upper Galilee (150 m), En Harod – Yizre’el Valley (50 m), Dor – Central Coastal Plain (0 m), Jerusalem (800 m), Bet Dagan and Rehovot – Southern Coastal Plain (50 m), Omer – Northern Negev (300 m), Yatir – Southern Hebron Mountains (500 m), Gilat – Northern Negev (150 m), Sa’ad – Southern Coastal Plain (50 m), Sede Boqer – Central Negev (600 m), Eilat – Southern Negev (0 m).