

SHORT COMMUNICATION

The first record of *Polyphylla olivieri* (Laporte de Castelanu, 1840) (Scarabaeidae: Melolonthinae) from Lebanon

OZ RITTNER

*The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Israel National Center for Biodiversity Studies
and Department of Zoology, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 6997801 Israel.
Email: israelbutterflies@gmail.com*

Polyphylla (Polyphylla) olivieri (Laporte de Castelanu, 1840) is a widely distributed June Beetle that occurs in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Syria and Israel (Bezdek 2006). Although it would be only logical to assume that the species is present also in Lebanon, it was never actually reported from there and so Lebanon remained a blank spot in its known range of distribution.



Figs 1, 2. *Polyphylla (Polyphylla) olivieri* (Laporte de Castelanu), male (1) and female (2) with corresponding data labels.

During the examination of the Melolonthini beetles deposited in the National Collection of Insects, The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Israel National Research Center, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel (SMNHATAU), the author encountered two specimens accompanied with handwritten data labels that read ‘Syria Bokaah [or Bekaah, as ink is blurred]’.

Bekaah is recently known as Beqaa [Becaa] Valley (in English), Wadi al-Biqā‘ [وادي البقاع] (in Arabic) or el-Bohah (Lebanese dialect). It is a large valley situated east of Beirut in Lebanon between the Anti-Lebanon mountains to the east and Mount Lebanon to the west.

Sadly the data labels state neither the name of the collector nor the collecting date. The only information beyond the locality is a statement that the specimens were received in January 1947.

Although this is not the place to elaborate on the complex history of Lebanon during the first half of the 20th century, it is essential to give a brief general account. Until 1943, when Lebanon became independent after the end of the French protectorate of Lebanon and Syria, it was considered to be a part of the Arab kingdom of Syria, or to be more accurate, a part of the Ottoman Empire. As mentioned above, it is unknown when exactly the specimens were collected but it is probable that it was before Lebanon existed as an independent country and therefore the name of Syria appears on the data labels instead that of Lebanon (as it is the case with many specimens collected in Lebanon or Israel during that period).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Henk K. Mienis (SMNHATAU) and an anonymous referee for reviewing the text and for their comments.

REFERENCES

- BEZDEK, A. 2006. Scarabaeidae: Melolonthinae: Melolonthini. *In*: Löbl, I. & Smetana, A. (eds), *Catalogue of Palaearctic Coleoptera*. Vol. 3. Scarabaeoidea – Scirtoidea – Dasciloidea – Buprestoidea – Byrrhoidea. Apollo Books, Stenstrup, pp. 191–198.