



Short Communication

Fishtail palm, *Caryota urens* L. – a new host plant record for the arecanut spindle bug, *Volkeliopsis arecae* (Miller & China) (Heteroptera: Miridae)

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Abstract

Fishtail palm, *Caryota urens* L. (Arecaceae) is reported as a host plant for the arecanut spindle bug, *Volkeliopsis arecae* (Miller & China) (Heteroptera: Miridae), for the first time.

Key words: India, Pest.

The spindle bug, *Volkeliopsis arecae* (Miller and China, 1956) was originally described in *Carvalhoia*, a monotypic genus, erected for placement of the new species, collected on areca palm in the erstwhile south Canara (Khandige, 1955). Kerzhner and Schuh (1998) replaced the generic name *Carvalhoia* Miller and China with *Mircarvalhoia*, as the former was a preoccupied junior homonym. Namyatova and Cassis (2016) synonymized *Mircarvalhoia* Kerzhner and Schuh with *Volkeliopsis* Poppius. The genus currently includes three species, the other two being *V. frontalis* (Poppius) and *V. mindanao* Namyatova and Cassis from the Philippine Islands. *Volkeliopsis arecae* is a major pest of arecanut confined to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Karnataka and Kerala (Yeswanth and Prathapan, 2014). Yeswanth and Prathapan (2014) reviewed information on its host plants, all of which are members of the palm family Arecaceae.

The fishtail palm, *Caryota urens* L. (Arecaceae), distributed in Sri Lanka, southern India and Myanmar (Henderson, 1950; Bhat, 2011), is

common in forests and countryside. A wide variety of products are made from its sap, extracted by tapping the peduncle. The wood is hard and durable, and pith of the stem contains edible starch. Fibre is extracted from the leaf sheath and the leaves are used for thatching and as elephant fodder.

Incidence of *V. arecae* on the fishtail palm was noticed at Kizhuparamba (N 11° 14' 03.2' E 76° 01' 9.8'), Malappuram District on 26 November 2017 and 9 February 2019 as well as at Thrippunithura (N 9° 57' 36.1' E 76° 24' 09.0'; altitude 44 m above msl), Ernakulam District on 6 February 2019. In Kizhuparamba, Malappuram District, 15 out of 21 palms observed on 9 February 2019 were infested. Six seedlings of less than 1 m height were found infested at Thrippunithura. The peak infestation in Malappuram was on a young palm of about 1.5 m height. Two adults and about 25 nymphs were observed on this palm and most of the nymphs were inside the unopened leaflets. Symptoms were typical and similar to those in arecanut palm (Nair and Das, 1962; Nair and Daniel, 1982) (Fig. 1). This is the first report of the fishtail palm as a host of *V. arecae*.

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Figure 1. Symptom of infestation of *Volkeliopsis arecae* on *Caryota urens*.

Voucher specimens of *V. arecae* are deposited in the ICAR - National Bureau of Insect Resources, Bengaluru (Accession no. NBAIR/HET-MIR/6219 to NBAIR/HET-MIR/6224).

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