

CACTOBLASTIS CACTORUM IN FLORIDA (LEPIDOPTERA: PYRALIDAE: PHYCITINAE)

TERHUNE S. DICKEL¹

Box 385, Homestead, FL 33090, USA

ABSTRACT.— New Florida records are noted for the cactus-feeding phycitine, *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Berg), described originally from Argentina and now established in the United States mainland.

KEY WORDS: Argentina, Bahamas, Cactaceae, Cuba, Leeward Is., Neotropical, Puerto Rico, West Indies, *Zophodia*.

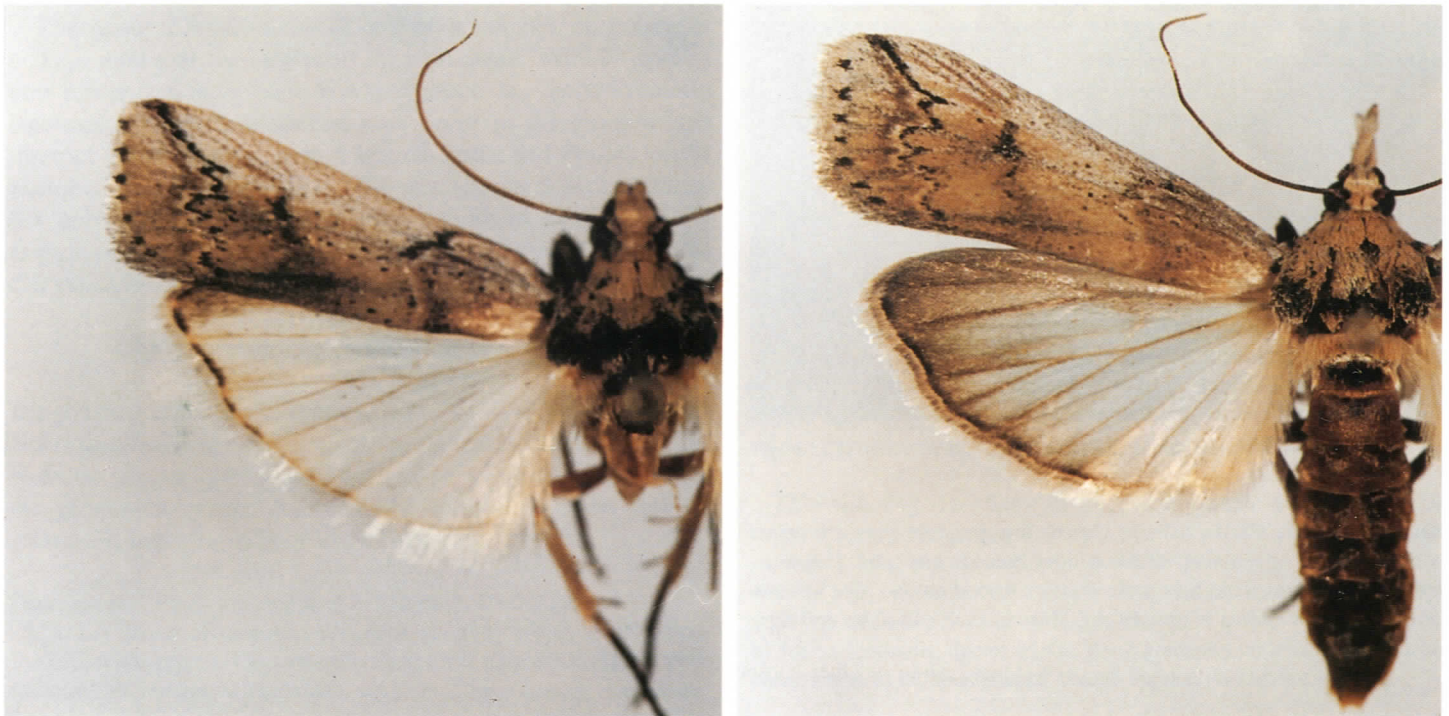


Fig. 1. *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Berg), Little Torch Key, Monroe Co., Florida: a) ♂, 17 May 1990 (FW = 11mm) (TSD); b) ♀, 19 May 1990 (FW = 14mm) (TSD).

On 30 Oct 1989 one female specimen of *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Berg) was collected by the author at mercury vapor light at Bahia Honda State Park, in the Florida Keys (Monroe Co.), just north of Big Pine Key. Subsequent to this first Florida collection, 13 specimens (7♂, 6♀) of this cactus-feeding moth were reared during May 1990 by the author from larvae gathered from *Opuntia stricta* (Cactaceae) on Little Torch Key and West Summerland Key, south of Big Pine Key in the lower Florida Keys. The discovery of *C. cactorum* in Florida was first reported on by Habeck and Bennett (1990).

The phycitine moth *C. cactorum* was first described by Berg (1885) from Argentina and placed in the genus *Zophodia*. Ragonot (1901) subsequently transferred the species to the genus

Cactoblastis. Simmonds and Bennett (1966) discussed the introduction of *C. cactorum* into the Leeward Islands of the West Indies (particularly Nevis, Montserrat, Antigua, and St. Kitts) to control introduced cactus. García-Tudurí *et al.* (1971) discussed the presence and host plants of *C. cactorum* in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The moth has also been introduced into Australia to control cacti there.

There are subsequent unconfirmed reports of the observation of this moth from the Bahamas in 1983 and from Cuba in 1988, and it is probable that by "island hopping" *C. cactorum* reached the Florida Keys, where it now appears to be well established.

Collections since mid-1990 to Oct 1991 by Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (Division of Plant Industry) plant inspectors, and by Dr. F. D. Bennett (Dept. of Entomology and Nematology, University of Florida), have verified *C. cactorum* as far north as Brevard Co., on the east coast, and Terra Ceia, Manatee Co., on the west coast of Florida.

1. Research Associate, Florida State Collection of Arthropods, Gainesville, FL 32614; Collaborator, Department of Entomology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560.

The robust moth appears to be a strong flier and is a potential hazard to *Opuntia* cacti throughout the southern United States.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Herbert H. Neunzig (Dept. of Entomology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC) for confirmation of my determination of *C. cactorum*.

LITERATURE CITED

Berg, C.

1885. Quindecim lepidoptera nova. Faunae republicae Argentinae et Uruguayensis. *Anal. Cient. Arg.* (Buenos Aires), 19:275-277.

García-Tudurí, J. C., L. F. Martorell, and S. M. Gaud

1971. Geographical distribution and host plants of the cactus moth *Cactoblastis cactorum* (Berg) in Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands. *J. Agric., Univ. Puerto Rico* (Mayaguez), [1971]:130-134.

Habeck, D. H., and F. D. Bennett

1990. *Cactoblastis cactorum* Berg (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae), a phycitine new to Florida. *Fla. Dept. Agric. Consumer Serv., Div. Plant Indus., Ent. Circ.* (Gainesville), 333:1-4.

Heinrich, C.

1956. American moths of the subfamily Phycitinae. *Bull. U. S. Natl. Mus.* (Washington), 207:1-581.

Ragonot, E. L.

1901. Monographie des Phycitinae et des Galleriinae. In *Mem. Lepid.* (Moscow), 8(2):15-17.

Simmonds, F. J., and F. D. Bennett

1966. Biological control of *Opuntia* spp. by *Cactoblastis cactorum* in the Leeward Islands (West Indies). *Entomophaga* (Paris), 11:183-189.