

THE CAPSID BUG, *HELOPELTIS* SP. NR. *BAKERI*
(HEMIPTERA: MIRIDAE), A NEW INSECT PEST OF
PILI (*CANARIUM OVATUM* ENGL.)¹

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Pili (*Canarium ovatum* Engl., Burseraceae) is an important plantation crop in the Bicol Region in Southern Luzon, Philippines. The most common insect pests of this crop plant are the Mango twig borer, *Niphonoclea albata* (Newman) (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae) and the Grey mealybug, *Ferrisia virgata* (Cockerell) (Hemiptera: Coccoidea: Pseudococcidae) (PCARRD, 1996). Aside from these two insects, Gabriel (1997) also listed the other Mango twig borer species, *Niphonoclea capito* (Pascoe) and the sphinx caterpillar, *Ambulyx subocellata* Felder (Lepidoptera: Sphingidae). Twig borers are considered serious pests because of their damage on the trunks and branches of fully grown trees. Navasero (1998) also described a new species of jumping plant lice attacking male flowers, namely *Pseudophacopteron calilungae* Navasero. Montecalvo (2001) listed *Thosea* sp. and a sphingid (possibly the same species as the one listed by Gabriel, 1997) on fully grown trees with the caterpillars feeding voraciously on the leaves. "Minor pests" were identified as *Helopeltis* sp., *Micraspis* sp. and *Leptoglossus* sp.

We are currently monitoring insect pests of pili and have exerted efforts to identify pests associated particularly on grafted seedlings in nurseries. From July to December, 2001, seven out of 14 species monitored attacked grafted seedlings at the Nursery of Camarines Sur State Agricultural College. Among these pests, the capsid bug appeared to be of particular economic importance due to its serious damage on the leaves. Its occurrence on pili is a **new record** and hence reported in this short note.

This capsid bug, here identified as a species of *Helopeltis* (Hemiptera: Miridae) (Figs. 1a & b), was first noted in November, 2000. Damage on grafted seedlings is characterized by feeding punctures on shoots and young leaves, which cause blackened areas (Figs. 1e-f). Heavy infestation usually results to death of seedlings. At the Department of Agriculture RFU Pili Nursery, capsid bugs had the highest population among 15 insects monitored for six months, with the peak in December and the lowest in July, 2001. Assessment of damage by the capsid bug showed death of newly grafted seedlings 12-17 days after inoculation.

Morphologically, the species appears to be very close to *Helopeltis bakeri*. Poppius (Figs. 1a-b) The latter was identified as the species attacking cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.) in Los Baños, Laguna (Gapud *et al.*, 1993). There are, how-

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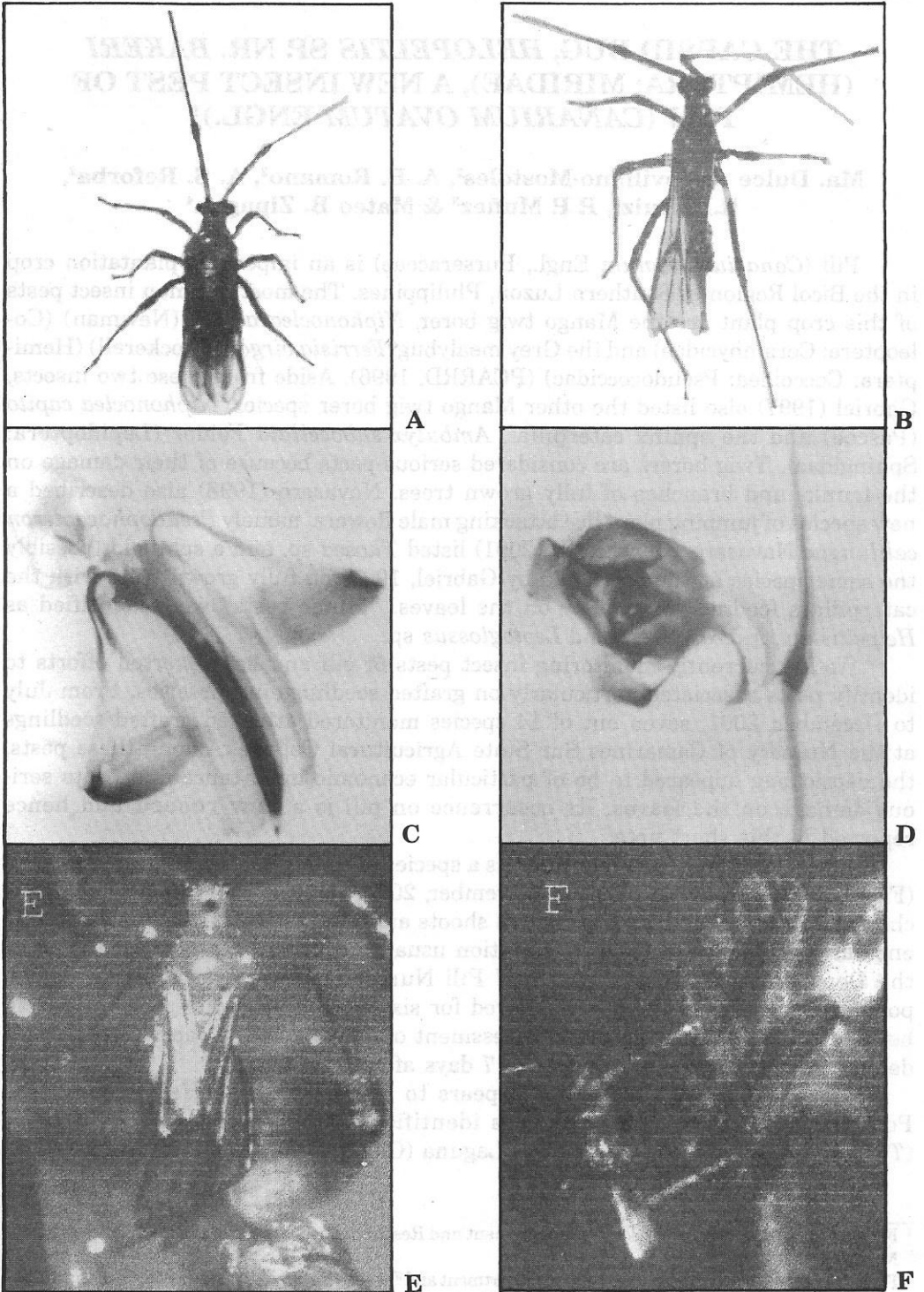


Figure 1. The capsid bug, *Helopeltis* sp. nr. *bakeri*, on pili. a. female, b. male, c., d. and e. damage on shoots and young leaves, f. male genitalia.

ever, some minor differences in genitalic characters (Figs. 1c-d) and hence, further taxonomic study is necessary to establish its identity. More detailed studies are being conducted, not only on grafted seedlings in nurseries but also on mature trees in plantations in the mainland provinces of the Bicol Region. To facilitate further studies on biology and management of this species and to record its occurrence and damage on pili, it is sufficient, at the moment, to refer to the species as *Helopeltis* sp. nr. *bakeri*.

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