

CORCYRA CEPHALONICA STAINTON, A NEW PREDATOR OF LAC INSECT,
KERRIA LACCA (KERR.) IN THE LABORATORY CULTURE

While perfecting the technique of mass multiplication of the lac predator, *Eublemma amabilis* Moore, at a temperature of $25^{\circ} \pm 1^{\circ}\text{C}$, it was observed that most of the moths in the rearing jars (15 cm \times 10 cm) containing cut twigs bearing lac insects with lac incrustation, were those of *Corcyra* instead of *Eublemma*. This happened perhaps due to the egg laying by astray moths in the rearing jars through the muslin covers.

Corcyra moths, so emerged, were collected in jars and supplied with cut twigs bearing grown up lac insects for oviposition. The eggs laid by the moths hatched into caterpillars which started feeding on grown up lac insects initially provided to the moths for oviposition. Later on, the lac bearing twigs were changed regularly at an interval of 3-4 days. The total period from the date of oviposition to the day of adult emergence was 49 to 71 days. The life cycle was allowed to continue even upto the second generation. *Corcyra* moths, obtained from the regular culture being maintained on crushed *jowar* in the Division of Entomology, were also exclusively provided with grown up lac insects for oviposition. Their progeny also successfully completed their life cycle in 69 to 85 days.

Corcyra larvae eat the lac, the lac insects along with their dead bodies and the bark of cut twigs provided, whereas *Eublemma* larvae eat on them except the bark. The twigs damaged by *Corcyra* larvae were, therefore, barkless and whitish in colour, whereas those by *Eublemma* larvae were intact with bark.

It was also observed that *Corcyra* caterpillars complete their life cycle on dead bodies of their own moths for several generations though the size of their adults decreased in each successive generation. A few jars containing *Corcyra* culture maintained on crushed *jowar* were also kept under observation. The moths could breed on the initially provided food for a few generations. When the crushed *jowar* was consumed, they even continued to breed on the dead bodies of the moths. The dead moths of previous generations were used as food by caterpillars of successive generations as a result of which the size was reduced to about one fourth that of the normal moth. Ultimately the breeding could not continue, perhaps, because of too much reduction in the size of moths.

It is, therefore, surmised that *Corcyra* larvae feed on, (i) the lac, (ii) bark of the hosts of lac insect, (iii) alive lac insects, (iv) dead bodies of the lac insects and their own moths, and complete their life cycle successfully. Hence, it may behave as a pest, predator and a scavenger depending upon the availability of the type of food.

Division of Entomology,
Indian Agricultural Research Institute,
New Delhi-12.

C. P. MALHOTRA
R. N. KATIYAR

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