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## An interesting finding of a mantis on Crete/Greece (Dictyoptera: Mantodea: Mantidae: Mantinae: Paramantini)

Un hallazgo interesante de una mantis en Creta/Grecia (Dictyoptera: Mantodea: Mantidae: Mantinae: Paramantini)

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**ABSTRACT:** A recent finding of a mantis on the Greek island of Crete is reported and discussed. Additional information on the distribution and similarity of *Hierodula transcaucasica* Brunner von Wattenwyl, 1878 and *Sphodromantis viridis* (Forskål, 1775) is given.

**KEY WORDS:** *Hierodula transcaucasica* Brunner von Wattenwyl, 1878, *Sphodromantis viridis* (Forskål, 1775), Paramantini, Mantidae, Mantodea, distribution, first record, Crete, Greece.

**RESUMEN:** Se presenta y discute un hallazgo reciente de una mantis en la isla griega de Creta. Se da información adicional acerca de la distribución y similitud de *Hierodula transcaucasica* Brunner von Wattenwyl, 1878, y *Sphodromantis viridis* (Forskål, 1775).

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Hierodula transcaucasica* Brunner von Wattenwyl, 1878, *Sphodromantis viridis* (Forskål, 1775), Paramantini, Mantidae, Mantodea, distribución, primera cita, Creta, Grecia.

### Introduction

Recently, a specimen of a mantis belonging to the tribe Paramantini was observed and photographed on the Greek island of Crete. Based on the photograph it is not possible to determine the species without any doubt. The specimen might be a female of *Hierodula transcaucasica* Brunner von Wattenwyl, 1878 or of *Sphodromantis viridis* (Forskål, 1775). Nevertheless, the finding should be published here because neither of the two species has been reported from Crete in scientific publications, yet.

The genus *Hierodula* Burmeister, 1838 includes more than 100 species. Most of them have been reported from Africa, Asia and Australia (PATEL & SINGH, 2016; OTTE *et al.*, 2018).

*H. transcaucasica*, commonly known as Giant Asian Mantis, has been reported from Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan (BATTISTON & MASSA, 2008; EHRMANN, 2011; GHAHARI & NASSER, 2014; PATEL & SINGH, 2016). Furthermore, it is spreading in the area of the Greek islands (BATTISTON *et al.*, 2017).

The genus *Sphodromantis* Stål, 1871 includes nearly 40 species. Most of them are distributed in Africa (PATEL & SINGH, 2016; OTTE *et al.*, 2018).

*S. viridis*, commonly known as Giant African Mantis or Bush Mantis, has been reported from Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya,

Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Palestine, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Somalia, Spain, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen (DELFOSSÉ, 2000; EHRMANN, 2011; PATEL & SINGH, 2016; SAMIN *et al.*, 2016; BATTISTON *et al.*, 2017; DOMENECH FERNÁNDEZ, 2018).

### Finding of a mantis on Crete

On 24-VII-2018, a female mantis was observed and photographed in the village of Kouses in the regional unit of Heraklion, near the southern coast of Crete (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1:** Female mantis, Kouses, Crete, Greece, 24-VII-2018, (VAN DER HEYDEN, 2018).  
<https://www.biodiversidadvirtual.org/insectarium/Paramantini-img1019338.html>

The observation took place at about 4:00 p.m. local time. The specimen was sitting on a plant of *Foeniculum vulgare* Mill. (Apiaceae) at the rim of a rural road. Different larval stages of *Papilio machaon* Linnaeus, 1758 (Lepidoptera: Papilionidae) as well as adults of *Graphosoma lineatum* (Linnaeus, 1758) and the endemic form *creticum* of *Graphosoma semipunctatum* (Fabricius, 1775) (Heteroptera: Pentatomidae) were observed on the same plant.

## Discussion

First, the observed specimen was determined as a female of *H. transcaucasica*. But as mentioned above and taking into account its characteristics visible in figure 1 as well as recent trends of the expansion of the respective distribution areas, it could be either a female of *H. transcaucasica* or of *S. viridis*.

*H. transcaucasica* and *S. viridis* are very similar species. The main characteristics to distinguish them are the fore coxal spines and the pronotum seen from the top (Roberto Battiston and Frank Wieland, personal comments). Based on photographs, the two species can be confused if these characteristics cannot be seen.

On the one hand, *H. transcaucasica* seems to spread out on the Greek islands, although specific records to prove this have not been published, yet. On the other hand, *S. viridis* has recently spread out on the Mediterranean islands (Roberto Battiston, personal comment) and might have arrived on Crete. Nevertheless, the presence of *S. viridis* on the Greek islands is uncertain (BATTISTON *et al.*, 2017).

Thus, at the moment and without more records from the island it cannot be unequivocally determined which of the two species has reached Crete. In any case, the record reported in this publication is the first one of the species in question for Crete.

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