

*Agri. Res. J. Kerala, 1978, 16 (1) 111*

**DASYCHIRA MENDOSA (LEP. LYMANTRIIDAE) AS A NEW PEST OF  
COTTON (*SALMALIA MALABARICA* (D. C.) SCHOTT, & NEDL.) AT  
MANNUTHY, KERALA**

*Dasychira mendosa* Hb. has been reported from India, Burma, Ceylon Java and Australia (Hampson, 1892). In India it has been recorded on a variety of plants which includes Ficus, Sann-hemp, Peech, Mango, Castor, Cajanus, Redgram, Ganga, Linseed, Santalum, Shorea, Teak, Zizyphus, Terminalia, Butea, Acacia and so on. (Fletcher, T.B., 1919; Browns F. G., 1969).

At Mannuthy, the larvae of this Lymantrid has been noted for the first time as seriously attacking cotton plants (*Salimalia malabarica*). The fully mature larva may attain a length of 5 to 6.5 cms. These occur in clusters and are voracious feeders devouring all tender plant parts. At Mannuthy these were noticed during the fruit setting stage of cotton ie. around February—March. During this period their attack was mainly confined to the rind of the fruits. At least one caterpillar was present on each branch observed. Their feeding pattern was of interest in that they progressed in one direction for some time then stopped for a while and restarted in another fresh area. Chunks of tissues were carved off from the rind and this resulted in the premature rupturing of the fruitwall exposing the tender cotton forming tissues and their subsequent fouling at a later stage. As much as 40% of the fruits were found to be damaged in this way.

Locally, this variety of cotton is in great demand since it is extensively used to stuff pillows and Mattresses thereby warrenting their timely control.

REFERENCES

- Hampson, G. F., 1892, Fauna of British India, *Moths*, I, 452.  
Fletcher, T. B., 1919. Proceeding of the 3rd Entomological Meeting, *Pusa*, 89.  
Ayyar, T. V. R., 1939. The hairy caterpillar pests of *S. India*. *The Madras Agri. J.* 4, 133.  
Browne, F. G. 1938. Pests and diseases of Forest Plantation Trees, 217.

Kerala Forest Research  
Institute, Peechi.

GEORGE MATHEW

(M. S. Received 2-4-1977)