

First Record of *Hyles dahlia* (Geyer, 1827) (Lepidoptera: Sphingidae) from the African Mainland¹

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¹The hawkmoth species *Hyles dahlia* (Geyer, 1827) is considered to be restricted to Corsica, Sardinia and the Balearic Islands (REBEL 1934), although there are occasional reports from Sicily (PITTAWAY 2004). In addition, it has also been found on the Catalan coast, in northeastern Spain, in 1975 (MASÓ PLANAS et al. 1979) and on the island of Pianosa, off the Tuscan coast (Italy) in 1998 (DAPPORTO et al. 1999).

Here I report the discovery of about 15–20 first instar (L1) larvae of *H. dahlia* feeding on *Euphorbia paralias* in northern Tunisia in October 2004. The exact locality is the beach at Residence Shiri, a small hotel and camping site on the coast north of Sejane between Cap Serrat and Bizerte. I collected and reared about a dozen individuals. After two moults it was possible to determine them as *H. dahlia* (a caterpillar is illustrated in Fig. 1 and an adult in Fig. 2). This species has to date not been reported from Africa. Voucher specimens will be deposited at the Zoologisches Forschungsinstitut und Museum Alexander Koenig (Bonn) and the Natural History Museum (London).

I doubt that *H. dahlia* is already established on the African mainland. I observed very few habitats for spurge-feeding hawkmoths in Tunisia, as I found little food plant in the parts of the country I visited. During my one-week tour (from the northern coast due south near the Algerian border, then back north along the eastern coast), I found herbaceous *Euphorbia* only along one inland stretch of road; otherwise there was only *E. paralias* along the coast. In the north, there are few sandy coastlines and these are often short and very isolated, with stretches of rocky coast and cultivated pine forest surrounding them. In parts of the eastern coast, the air is so humid that water condenses on the plants and the sand becomes baked onto them, so that they do not appear to be easily eatable by caterpillars. Also, the beaches are often partly or wholly developed for the tourist industry and thus it is possible that the populations of *E. paralias* have become relictual or destroyed due to human activities. I found no other *Hyles* caterpillars at the beach of Residence Shiri, or any indications

of prior occurrence, such as droppings or nibbled plant sprouts. In contrast, on other beaches in Tunisia, and one especially on the north coast, as well as at one locality inland, I found numerous caterpillars of *H. tithymali*, but I did not find any other *H. dahlia* caterpillars. Therefore, I consider this first record of *H. dahlia* from the African mainland is probably the result of a rare dispersion event, possibly of only a single fertilised female from Sardinia, which lies geographically nearest to the Tunisian locality.



Fig. 1: Fifth instar larva of *Hyles dahlia* found on *Euphorbia paralias* in Tunisia in October 2004 (feeding in captivity on *E. myrsinites*).

¹ Clas Michael Naumann zu Königsbrück (26.06.1939 – 15.02.2004) zum Gedenken



Fig. 2: An adult moth of *Hyles dahlii*, emerged from the pupa in February 2005. The individual was collected as first instar larva in Tunisia in October 2004 and reared in captivity.

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