

Castor Hairy Caterpillar

Olepa ricini (Fabricius, 1775)

(Lepidoptera: Arctiidae)

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An unidentified caterpillar feeding on banana leaves was discovered by Arnold Route on Saipan on December 23, 2013. Some caterpillars were reared in the lab. These pupated and developed into moths. Digital images of the moth were submitted to the Pacific Islands Distance Diagnostics and Recommendation System on January 30, 2014 ([sample 543](#)). Renold Ito, USDA-APHIS-PPQ, Honolulu, identified the moth as the castor hairy caterpillar, *Pericallia ricini* (Lepidoptera: Arctiidae) based upon images of adults. *Pericallia ricini* is a synonym of *Olepa ricini* [Wikipedia \[2014\]](#).



Fig. 1. Caterpillar.

DESCRIPTION

This moth is native to India and Sri Lanka where its caterpillars attack cotton, castor, sunflower, gingelly, maize, ivy gourd, brinjal (eggplant), sweetpotato, banana, and cucurbits (plants in the melon family) [Indian National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Insect Pests \[2014\]](#).

DISTRIBUTION

Olepa ricini is only known as a permanent resident of India and Sri Lanka [Witt et al. \[2005\]](#). However, this moth has been collected in Taiwan [Anonymous \[2014\]](#) and the United Kingdom [Wall \[2014\]](#). This is a new record for Saipan and the Mariana Islands. Distribution on these islands is unknown.



Fig. 2. Moth.



Fig. 3. Damage to banana.

Thomas J. Witt, Gunter C. Muller, Vasiliy D. Kravchenko, Michael A. Miller, Axel Hausmann, and Wolfgang Speidel. A new *Olepa* species from Israel. *NachrBl. bayer. Ent.*, 54(3/4):101–115, 2005. URL <http://www.zsm.mwn.de/lep/Olepa.pdf>. [Online; accessed 7-March-2014].

NOTE

Species determination of members of the *Olepa* genus is difficult Witt et al. [2005] However, DNA barcoding is available for these species Barcode of Life Database [2014]. DNA barcoding should be applied to the Saipan specimens.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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