

Research Note

OXYDIA VESULIA (CRAMER) (LEPIDOPTERA: GEOMETRIDAE), A GEOMETRID CATERPILLAR OF COFFEE IN PUERTO RICO¹

The order Lepidoptera includes many harmful species of insects whose larvae damage plants. Among these are the major coffee pests *Leucoptera coffeella*, the leaf miner in the Americas, and the closely related *Leucoptera meyricki* in Africa. There are many other species of relative importance in various parts of the world, such as noctuids, cutworms, stem-borers, and many berry and foliage eaters.²

Oxydia vesulia (Cramer) was recorded by Wolcott³ under *Microgonia* as possibly the largest Geometrid in Puerto Rico, since adults may have a wing spread just short of three inches. Martorell⁴ mentioned it as *Oxydia*, but none of these authors recorded coffee plants as its host. In South America² and in Africa⁵ another species doing the same damage was reported as *Ascotis selenaria reciprocaria*.

In September 1987, Miguel Monroig, Extension Service coffee specialist, found larvae affecting coffee foliage at the Experiment Substation coffee farm in Castañer. After consulting with Dr. Silverio Medina, Experiment Station entomologist, we preliminarily classified the larvae and adults as

Microgonia vesulia (Cramer) in July 1985 from material collected at Castañer by Elvin Boneta, coffee substation director. Further inspection comparisons of the specimen previously identified in the entomological museum of the Experiment Station at Río Piedras corroborated that the species present was *Oxydia vesulia* (Cramer).

The adults of this species vary considerably in appearance, but in general they are light yellowish-brown, with a darker stripe extending from the pointed and curved apex of the forewing to the middle of the inner margin of the hind wing.³ The full grown larva (fig. 1) is a large gray-brown looper, which when at rest resembles a bare twig, stiff and immobile, resting only on the anal prolegs.

This is the first record of *O. vesulia* damage to coffee in Puerto Rico. For the last 2 years the coffee measuring worm has been found in areas of Adjuntas, Lares and Yauco.

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²Le Pelley, R. H., 1973. Coffee insects. *Ann. Rev. Entomol.* 18: 121-42.

³Wolcott, G. N., 1948. The insects of Puerto Rico. *J. Agric. Univ. P. R.* 4: 636-46.

⁴Martorell, L. F., 1976. Annotated food plant catalog of the insects of Puerto Rico. *Agric. Exp. Stn. Univ. P. R.*

⁵Wheatly, P. E., 1963. The giant coffee looper *Ascotis selenaria reciprocaria*. *East Afr. Agric. For. J.* 29: 143-46.



FIG. 1.—Larvae of *O. vesulia* on coffee.