

A RICE FEEDING BUPRESTID FROM MALAYSIA: *APHANISTICUS PENNINSULA* OBENB.

By Gary V. Manley¹

Abstract: *Aphanisticus penninsula* Obenb. (Coleoptera: Buprestidae) was observed to feed on leaves of rice plants under laboratory conditions. Field observations indicated lalang (*Imperata cylindrica* Beauv.) to be the major wild host. *A. penninsula* has a wide distribution in SE Asia and, along with other insects, can live on both lalang and rice plants.

Aphanisticus penninsula Obenberger, a widely distributed buprestid in SE Asia and the Pacific region, was observed to feed on the leaves of rice plants under laboratory conditions. Beetles were not collected in the field from rice plants, but were collected throughout the rice-growing area in close association with rice fields. Field-collected specimens caged with potted rice plants readily fed on the leaves over periods of several days and appeared able to survive on a diet of rice leaves. Feeding consisted of scraping the outer layer of tissue from the upper surface of the leaf, resulting in narrow light streaks being formed in the leaves which were normally parallel to the veins.

The primary host of *A. penninsula* appeared to be lalang (*Imperata cylindrica* Beauv.), an extremely common plant in Malaysia. Largest concentrations of *A. penninsula* on lalang were observed to be on plants growing in lightly shaded conditions, such as under rubber trees. Specimens were most frequently collected near margins or in young plantations that had not closed, with few specimens being in more heavily shaded areas. Areas of lalang completely exposed to the sun also proved to be unproductive collecting areas, which may explain why *A. penninsula* was not collected from rice fields.

The species was most easily collected by sweeping with a net, but specimens could also be collected by hand picking from leaves with careful searching. *A. penninsula* was by no means a rare species and adults were active the year around.

It is interesting that *A. penninsula* feeds on both rice and lalang, because other insects were also noted to feed on those 2 plants, primarily *Melanitis leda* (L.), a leaf-eating lepidopteran which occasionally reaches detrimental economic levels in rice fields. Since lalang acts as a host for rice-field insects, the species may also serve as a reservoir for natural enemies, as suggested by records of *Andrallus spinidens* Fabricius (a predatory pentatomid) being collected from lalang. The relationship of phytophagous insects on lalang and rice merits investigation both regarding natural enemy relationships and potential rice pests.

Acknowledgments: I express my thanks to Dr S. G. Wellso (Dept. of Entomology, Michigan State University) for his help in identification of this species.

SELECTED LITERATURE

Obenberger, Jan. 1924. A study of the Buprestidae, collected by Charles Fuller Baker in Singapore, Borneo, and the Philippine Islands. *Philp. J. Sci.* 25 (5): 620-28.

¹ 7907 Rustic Forest, San Antonio, Texas 78239, U.S.A.