

First Records of the Rhododendron Leafhopper (*Graphocephala fennahi*) (Hemiptera: Auchenorrhyncha: Cicadellidae) from the Czech Republic

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Abstract

ŠPRYŇAR P. (2005): **First records of the rhododendron leafhopper** (*Graphocephala fennahi*) (Hemiptera: Auchenorrhyncha: Cicadellidae) **from the Czech Republic**. Plant Protect Sci., **41**: 38–41.

In summer and autumn of 2004 the cicadellid leafhopper species *Graphocephala fennahi* was detected in the Czech Republic for the first time as a new alien insect species feeding on *Rhododendron*. The species is native to North America and was introduced in the 1930's to Great Britain and in the 1970's to continental Europe, where its invasion and relationship to the rhododendron bud blast disease have been studied in detail. At present, the Czech populations of *G. fennahi* appear to be restricted to the Prague city area and near surroundings, but further spread of *G. fennahi* can be expected.

Keywords: Homoptera; insect invasions; ornamental horticulture; plant-animal interactions

Graphocephala fennahi Young 1977 was introduced to Europe from mountain regions in North America in the first half of the 20th century. The first record of its occurrence from Great Britain was published in 1935 (England) and subsequently referred to as *Graphocephala coccinea* (Forster 1771) (e.g. HOWELL & WOOD 1962). In 1977, D.A. Young revealed that the leafhopper concerned was not *G. coccinea* but a new species, *G. fennahi*, with the two species differing slightly in colour and male genitalia as well as in host preferences (ULENBERG & VAN FRANKENHUYZEN 1986).

The first record of *G. fennahi* from continental Europe was published in 1971 (Switzerland) – see SERGEL (1987). Since then, *G. fennahi* has spread into many countries in central and southern Europe: Germany, Denmark, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Austria and Italy (SERGEL 1987; VIDANO *et al.* 1987). This expansion may have been supported by warm weather in the last decades as well as by international trade and

transportation of plants of *Rhododendron* (see also HOFFMANN 1990). Still, the dispersion mode of *G. fennahi* has not been exactly explained yet (FELDMANN & BUSSMANN 1993).

Determination of *G. fennahi* is easy due to the conspicuous appearance of adult specimens: they are light green with yellow legs and two strikingly red or orange stripes on the side of their first pair wings (Figures 1–3). Length of the adult body is 8–9.5 mm, females are a little longer than males. In the Czech Republic the use of coloured identification guides translated from German into Czech is also possible and helpful (e.g. NIENHAUS *et al.* 1998; STICHMANN & KRETZSCHMAR 1998; BÖHMER & WOHANKA 2003).

The main host plants of *Graphocephala fennahi* belong to the genus *Rhododendron* (incl. *Azalea*). However, the list of host plants of *G. fennahi* in Europe compiled by SERGEL (1987) and other records have indicated that *G. fennahi* has extended its host plant spectrum in its allochthonous area



Figure 1. Adult specimen (female) of the rhododendron leafhopper (*Graphocephala fennahi*) from Prague-Hrnčíře, Central Bohemia (Photo J. Dvořák)



Figure 2. Two specimens of *Graphocephala fennahi* on the leaf surface of *Rhododendron* (Photo J. Dvořák)



Figure 3. *Graphocephala fennahi*, lateral view; length 9 mm (Photo J. Dvořák)

in the Palearctic (e.g. NIEDRINGHAUS & OLTHOFF 1986; SERGEL 1987). In Europe it has one generation per year, while in North America two generations are common (HOFFMANN 1990). Oviposition occurs from September till the end of October, and the eggs are the overwintering stage. The first larval instars emerge at the beginning of May, just before flowering of the rhododendrons (ULENBERG & VAN FRANKENHUYZEN 1986). There are five larval instars; they feed on sap from the undersides of the leaves. The adults can be found from July to November, rarely to the middle of December (ULENBERG & VAN FRANKENHUYZEN 1986; SERGEL 1987). The leafhopper can reach high population densities in gardens, cemeteries, parks and nurseries, especially in the lowlands and in the hilly vegetation belt (FELDMANN & BUSSMANN 1993). It can be eliminated with an appropriate insecticide.

Moreover, *G. fennahi* is believed to facilitate transmission of the rhododendron bud blast disease caused by the hyphomycete *Seifertia azaleae* (Peck) Partridge & Morgan-Jones (\equiv *Pycnostysanus azaleae*

(Peck) E.W. Mason) (e.g. GESSNER 1984; PARTRIDGE & MORGAN-JONES 2002). In European countries the co-occurrence of *G. fennahi* and *S. azaleae* has been recorded often (e.g. ULENBERG & VAN FRANKENHUYZEN 1986). It is assumed that egg-laying damages the *Rhododendron* buds and creates points of entry for the disease. Eggs are inserted into the bud scales between the epidermis and the subepidermal layer by the ovipositor, but laboratory experiments provided no conclusive evidence that the fungus entered the bud tissue through this wound (HOWELL & WOOD 1962). Recent studies showed that infestation by *S. azaleae* is largely influenced also by other factors, especially waterlogged soil and dispersion pattern of plants (HOMMES *et al.* 2003). The hyphomycete *S. azaleae* has not yet been recorded in the Czech Republic.

According to my knowledge, *Graphocephala fennahi* was first detected in the Czech Republic in Central Bohemia in Prague-Hrncíře area by my colleague Josef Dvořák, who drew my attention to the spread of this leafhopper. Currently it is known from the following localities (the grid cell codes of the Central European grid mapping are mentioned): Bohemia centr., Praha-Hrncíře, street Za Šmatlíkem (6053a), 1.–18. VIII. 2004, in the garden, more ex. observed on the leaves of *Rhododendron* spp., 2 ♀ J. Dvořák leg. et det., P. Špryňar revid. et coll.; Praha-Nové Město, street Na slupi, Botanical Garden of Charles University (5952b), beating of *Rhododendron* species, 1. IX. 2004, 2 ♀, 20. IX. 2004, 2 ♂, 4 ♀, P. Špryňar leg., det. et coll.; Průhonice, Průhonický park (5953c and 6053a), beating of *Rhododendron* species, 31. VIII. 2004, 5 ♂, 16 ♀, 2. IX. 2004, 2 ♂, 5 ♀, 26. X. 2004, 2 ♂, 14 ♀, P. Špryňar leg., det. et coll.

These records indicate that *G. fennahi* could be widespread in the surroundings of Prague in larger plantations of *Rhododendron* bushes. Further spread of this species in the Czech Republic can be expected, and monitoring of its invasion should be required.

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Abstrakt

ŠPRYŇAR P. (2005): **První údaje o výskytu sítinovky pěnišníkove** (*Graphocephala fennahi*) (Hemiptera: Auchenorrhyncha: Cicadellidae) v **České republice**. Plant Protect. Sci., **41**: 38–41.

V létě a na podzim 2004 byl v České republice poprvé zaznamenán výskyt sítinovky pěnišníkove (*Graphocephala fennahi* Young 1977), nového nepůvodního druhu křísa žijícího na pěnišnicích (*Rhododendron* spp.). *G. fennahi* pochází ze Severní Ameriky, ve třicátých letech 20. století byl tento křís zavlečen do Velké Británie a v sedmdesátých letech 20. století na evropský kontinent. Invazní šíření tohoto druhu v Evropě a jeho vztah k chorobě pěnišníků způsobované houbou *Seifertia azaleae* (Peck) Partridge & Morgan-Jones (≡ *Pycnostysanus azaleae* (Peck) E. W. Mason) bylo poměrně podrobně studováno. Dosud známé české populace křísa *G. fennahi* jsou zatím omezeny na území hlavního města Prahy (Hrncíře a Botanická zahrada Karlovy univerzity) a na jeho nejbližší okolí (Průhonický park), lze však očekávat jejich další šíření.

Klíčová slova: sítinovka pěnišníkova; hmyzí invaze; okrasné rostliny; pěnišník

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