

Reduviid bug *Acanthaspis siva* - a predator of honey bee and stingless bee in Kerala

K.S. Premila, S. Devanesan and K.K. Shailaja

AICRP on Honey bees and Pollinators,

Department of Entomology

College of Agriculture, Vellayani

Thiruvananthapuram- 695 522, Kerala, India

kspremila@yahoo.co.in

Acanthaspis siva is an entomosuccivorous assassin bug (Reduviidae: Hemiptera). Body is black with wrinkles (rugulose); the deep inner layer of the skin (corium), bears basal and sub basal angular creamy spot; flattened lateral borders of the abdomen (connexivum) is spotted with pale yellow colour; basal joint of antennae is black and remaining joints are brown; posterior lobe of pronotum is rugulose and centrally marked with parallel grooves (sulcate); scutellar spine ascendant obliquely and apex of membrane is creamy white (fig. 1 b).

It is found in the tropical rain forests of southern India, underneath the loose dry barks of trees like *Eucalyptus globulus*, *Thespesia populanea*, *Pithecellobium dulce*, *Tamarindus indicus* and *Hevea brasiliensis*. It has been either found in groups or solitary condition. The adults are found with nymphs. Nymphs camouflage themselves by attaching bits of debris over the body which reduces the chance to be cannibalized by co-instars (fig. 1 a).

The bug *A. siva* has been observed and collected from Rosemala, Kollam District and Balaramapuram, Trivandrum, Kerala from the hives of Indian bee *Apis cerana indica* Fab. The same is also observed near stingless bee, *Trigona iridipennis* colonies kept at AICRP apiary, College of Agriculture, Vellayani. Both nymphs and adults of *A. siva* freely lurk around the hives, crevices or in tree trunk near the location of the bee colonies. It hunts worker bees at their nests. Observations revealed that adult bugs suck body fluid of adult worker bees of *Apis cerana* and *A. indica*. The bug approaches the prey, pierces its body and immobilises it before sucking the fluid. It is an aggressive, voracious feeder during nymphal stages and feeds on an average of 10 *A. cerana* bees per day. Gradually the feeding rate decreases to 2-4 bees per day and adults feed on 2-3 bees per day. Results are in accordance with Subbiah and Mahadevan (1957).

Reference:

M. S. Subbiah and V. Mahadevan, 1957, The life history and biology of the reduvid—*Acanthaspis siva*—a predator of the indian honey bee *Aapis indica* f. *Indian J vet sci anim husb.* **27**: 117.



Fig. 1 a- *Acanthaspis siva* - Nymph



Fig. 1 b- *Acanthaspis siva* - Adult