



A new *Luprops* species from Western Ghats with redescriptions and identification key to the species of Indian Peninsula and Sri Lanka (Tenebrionidae: Lagriinae: Lupropini)

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Abstract

Description of *Luprops devagiriensis*, **sp. n.** from montane evergreen forest (shola) in the southern region of Western Ghats, a global biodiversity hot spot in southwest India is given along with first report of *L. rugosissimus* Kaszab, 1980 outside Sri Lanka and redescriptions of *L. tristis* (Fabricius, 1801), *L. curticolis* Fairmaire, 1896 and *L. gracilior* Fairmaire, 1896. Notes on the habits of *L. tristis* Fabricius, a nuisance pest in residential buildings in the rubber belts of the south Indian state of Kerala and an identification key to the species from Indian Peninsula and Sri Lanka are provided.

Key words: Coleoptera, Tenebrionidae, *Luprops*, taxonomy, new species, Kerala, India, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Members of *Luprops* Hope, 1833 are inconspicuous, detritivorous litter dwelling beetles found from tropical Africa through Asia and the East Indies to Papua New Guinea (Doyen *et al.*, 1990). However, this generalization about the conspicuousness of *Luprops* is irrelevant in the rubber tracts along the western slopes of the southern region of the Western Ghats in the South Indian state of Kerala where massive post-rainy invasions numbering about 0.5 to over 4 million per residential building, and their prolonged stay in a state of dormancy makes them the most undesirable beetles to farming communities (Sabu *et al.*, 2007). Attraction of these beetles towards light, following overnight invasion into buildings is a frustrating nuisance for the residents. Clusters of several hundred to thousands crawl inside living rooms and fall off into beds and food from ceilings. Subsequently they congregate in dark, undisturbed areas such as attics and wall voids and remain dormant for several months (Fig.1). They do not sting or bite, but when disturbed, (such as picking them off the walls or when they are squashed or pressed against while sleeping), they release an irritating odoriferous phenolic secretion that leads to burns on the skin. Its current status as a serious nuisance, non-existence of detailed descriptions of the species recorded from the region and lack of verified type specimens in regional museums necessitates detailed taxonomic literature and an identification key to study its diversity and geographical distribution in the region.

Nine species of *Luprops* are reported from the Indian subcontinent — 4 from the Nepal-Himalayan belt and 4 from South West region. Existence of the ninth species (*L. cribratellus* Fairmaire, 1896) is doubtful, as the specimens available for the authors seem to be conspecific with one of the Himalayan species, *L. indicus* (Wiedemann, 1823) or *L. yunnanus* Fairmaire, 1887. Though 5 species had been reported earlier from South India (Fairmaire 1896), after the transfer of *L. marginicollis* Fairmaire, 1896 to *Anaedus* Blanchard, 1843 by Kaszab (1979a) only 4 species are currently known from the region. A workable key to the species from