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## First record for Uruguay of *Brassolis astyra* Godart (Lepidoptera, Nymphalidae, Brassolinae)

### Primer registro para Uruguay de *Brassolis astyra* Godart (Lepidoptera, Nymphalidae, Brassolinae)

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#### Abstract

*Brassolis astyra* Godart is reported for the first time in three localities of Uruguay. This species is found on different native and exotic palm trees causing severe damage.

**Keywords:** Lepidoptera, Nymphalidae, *Brassolis astyra*, Uruguay, Palmaceae

#### Resumen

Se menciona por primera vez la presencia de *Brassolis astyra* Godart en tres localidades de Uruguay. Esta especie se encuentra sobre distintas palmeras nativas y exóticas, a las que daña seriamente.

**Palabras clave:** Lepidoptera, Nymphalidae, *Brassolis astyra*, Uruguay, Palmaceae

The genus *Brassolis* contains normally large butterflies with spots on the wings forming characteristic designs. They have twilight and nocturnal habits and in larval stage they live mainly of palmaceae. Its distribution is essentially neotropical, in tropical and subtropical regions some species cause significant damage. In Brazil, *Brassolis astyra* Godart and *Brassolis sopharae* (Linnaeus) (Mariconi, 1952) are important, while *Brassolis isthnia* Bates attacks palm trees in Central America (Zhang, 1994). Biezanko and others (1974, 1978) cite only two species of Brassolinae for Uruguay, both on palm trees, although none belonging to the genus *Brassolis*. Of

these, *Opsiphanes invirae* (Hübner) appears more frequently. Although it is not common, it is observed relatively easily in certain years, mainly in the north of the country.

It attacks different palms, among them butia (*Butia capitata*), latania (*Livistona* spp.), phoenix palm (*Phoenix canariensis*), queen palm (*Syagrus ro-manzoffianum*) and washingtonia (*Washingtonia* spp.).

However, since 1998, first in a timely manner and more recently in a more pronounced way, the presence of *B. astyris* observed in Uruguay, with records so far limited to the departments of Cerro



Largo, Maldonado and Rocha, although its presence in other parts of the territory is not to be ruled out. Larvae of this species were collected on palm trees and reared in laboratory until the emergence of adults. The material was sent to Dr. S. Silveira Neto of the Escola Superior de Agricultura, Luiz de Queiroz, for identification.

This species causes severe defoliations, with the complete destruction of the leaves except for the rachis.

It is common for attacks to initiate or concentrate primarily on the central and new leaves. Depending on the number of larvae and the size of the palm, the damage can extend to the entire plant to the point of being completely devoid of leaves. Attacks begin in early spring and continue until December or mid-January, when mature larvae pupate. In the populated centers *B. astyra* appears on ornamental palms of streets, squares and gardens of private residences. It is also found in nursery plants. So far, the palm trees that have suffered the most are: phoenix palm, washingtonia and queen palm. Link and Alvarez (1979) point to the latter as the most attacked in Santa Maria (Rio Grande do Sul), unlike the butia palm that normally registers mild attacks.

*B. astyra* has a wide range that includes northern Argentina, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, as well as Brazil (Mariconi, 1952). In the latter country it extends from Pará, Pernambuco and other northern

states to Rio Grande do Sul as the southernmost region (Silva and others, 1968). It is reasonable to assume that its introduction to Uruguay occurred naturally from the latter state, bordering our territory.

The adult butterfly's wing expansion is 70 to 95 mm (Figure 1).

Wings are dark brown, the forewings are characterized by having a large orange-yellow transverse spot, which is also observed ventrally. The ventral side of both wings is brown, forewings have a small black spot close to the apical angle and hindwings have three small reddish spots, plus a fourth somewhat larger, brown spot surrounded by a reddish circle and another black one. Adults, flying in the evenings and nights, oviposit on the palm leaves, forming compact groups of several dozen eggs. The developed larva measure approximately 60 mm long; has robust body and bulky head with a neck-like constriction behind the head (Figure 2). The head is dark reddish and the rest of the body is brown with a series of yellowish white longitudinal lines. A short, whitish hairiness is evenly distributed throughout the body. Larvae, which have gregarious habits, build bulky nests with silk threads and shelter inside. Each nest hosts several dozen larvae and is abandoned only during the night to feed. Attacks occur mainly in isolated plants and located in open spaces. In the aforementioned localities, this species represents the most serious pest problem affecting certain species of palm trees.

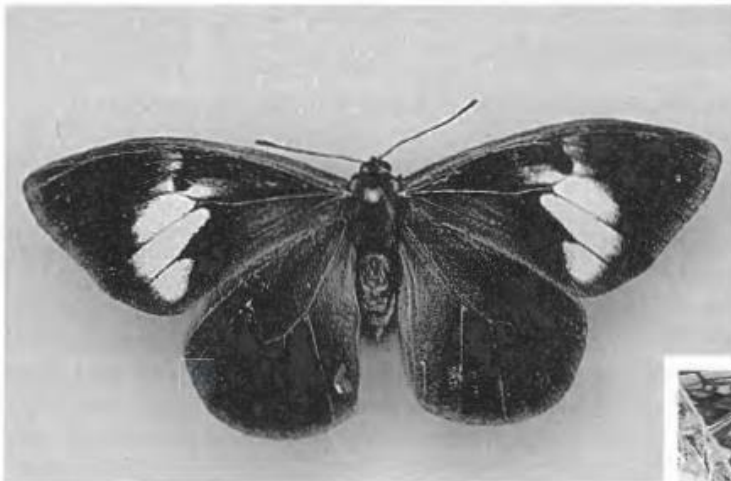


Figura 2. Larvae of *Brassolis astyra* Godart



Figure 1. Adult of *Brassolis astyra* Godart.

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