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Orgyia dubia arcerii Ragusa, 1923 - Italy, Sicily: Salt pans of Trapani

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***Orgyia (Clethrogyna) dubia arcerii* Ragusa, 1923 (Lepidoptera Erebididae).** *Orgyia dubia* Tauscher 1806 is a small moth of family Erebididae with a relict distribution in Europe, northern Africa, central and southwestern Asia. The *Orgyia dubia* complex list the following taxa: ssp. *splendida* (Spain, Morocco), ssp. *josephina* (NW-Africa), ssp. *algerica* (N-Africa to Israel), ssp. *arcerii* (Sicily), ssp. *turcica*: (Cyprus, Asia Minor, Iran), ssp. *transcaspica* (Turkmenistan), ssp. *dubia* (E-Europe, C-Asia). However, several problems remain regarding the real taxonomy of this group. The male of this species has well-developed and functional wings, whereas the female is completely different being apterous and vermiform. The female never leaves the cocoon, and the male, probably attracted by specific pheromones, must pierce it to mate inside the cocoon. In particular, *Orgyia dubia arcerii* is a sicilian endemic subspecies described in 1923 by the Sicilian entomologist Enrico Ragusa. It lives in a small and particular coastal environment like the salt pans of Trapani and Marsala (western Sicily, Italy). The males are active from May to December (Fig. 1, above) and are observed in broad daylight in flight in search of the flightless females living in the cocoon (Fig. 2, below). Caterpillars are found on halophilic plants such as *Halimione portulacoides*, *Suaeda vera* and *Chenopodiaceae* plants they feed on. They have a high parasitism (in some years up to 90%) by Hymenoptera and to a lesser extent by some dipterans. *Orgyia dubia arcerii* due to these peculiar biological characteristics (apterous female and high mortality of caterpillars attacked by parasites), the still unclear taxonomy, and the very small area in which it lives represents one of the most interesting Sicilian endemics but particularly vulnerable and worthy of protection.

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