

FIRST REPORT OF *RUMEX ACETOSA* L. AS A HOST PLANT OF *ALTICA HIMENSIS* SHUKLA (COLEOPTERA: CHRYSOMELLIDAE) FROM KASHMIR

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ABSTRACT: The larvae and adults of *Altica himensis* Shukla (Coleoptera: Chrysomellidae) were found damaging the leaves of *Rumex acetosa* L. in Kashmir Valley during a survey in the year 2015. The adults of *A. himensis* were observed nibbling and the larvae skeletonized the leaves of the host plant. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of *Rumex acetosa* L. as a host of *Altica himensis* Shukla (Coleoptera: Chrysomellidae) from Kashmir. A note on the extent of damage and period of activity of the reported pest has also been incorporated in the paper.

Key words: *Rumex acetosa*, *Altica himensis*, Kashmir

Rumex acetosa L. (common sorrel) locally called as "Abej" in Kashmir is an herbaceous perennial plant belonging to order Carophyllales and buckwheat family Polygonaceae. This plant is native to the British Isles² and can also be found in Britain, most of Europe, North America, Greenland and temperate Asia¹. The leaves of the *R. acetosa* are acidic in taste and contain high levels of oxalic acid⁹. *R. acetosa* is reported to have medicinal properties: an astringent³; for curing stomach problems⁵, chest problems⁶ and cancer & tumors⁸ and also acts as a diuretic². Common sorrel was a popular cultivated vegetable in Europe until the middle Ages, when improved varieties of related species replaced it and today it is gathered from the wild for use in sauces, and also as a spinach or salad leaf². In Kashmir Himalaya too, the

young leaves are also used as vegetable particularly by the tribal people^{4,7}.

The present author, while surveying insect pests of cultivated and wild varieties of vegetable crops in Kashmir in year 2015, found a beetle, *Altica himensis* Shukla (Coleoptera: Chrysomellidae) damaging *R. acetosa* in various localities and areas of the Kashmir. Both larvae and adults of this beetle caused significant damage to this plant (plates, 1, II, III & IV). The adults nibbled on leaves and ate away small patches of leaf lamina causing various shaped holes and the larvae completely 'skeletonized' the leaves. When the infestation was high, the larvae and adults were found completely defoliating the entire infested plant. The peak period of activity of the beetle was observed in the months of May and June. As many as 15

to 20 adults per leaf and 8 to 10 larvae per leaf were recorded during high infestation period. **To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of *R. acetosa* L. as a host of *A. himensis* Shukla (Coleoptera: Chrysomellidae) from**

Kashmir. Some of the earlier reports of *Rumex* sp. being attacked by genus *Altica* (*Altica himensis* Shukla, *Altica caerulea* Olivier) in other regions have been given by Jayala ¹¹, Sangita ¹² and Clark¹⁰.



Plate-I



Plate- II

Plate I & II: Larvae of *A. himensis* devouring the leaves of *R. acetosa* recorded in Kashmir



Plate –III



Plate- IV

Plate III & IV: Adults of *A. himensis* devouring leaves of *R. acetosa* recorded in Kashmir

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