

***Masalia nubila* (Hampson).**

Certain authors have made reference to heliothine moths other than *H. albipunctella* causing damage to millet panicles in the Sahel. In fact the seminal research paper on *Heliocheilus albipunctella* by Vercambre (1978), is entitled "*Raghuva* spp. and *Masalia* sp., chenilles des chandelles du mil en zone sahélienne", referring to the complex of *Raghuva* (= *Heliocheilus*) species and an unidentified species of *Masalia*. The content of that paper, however, relates almost exclusively to *H. albipunctella*. And subsequent field surveys during the 1980s allowed taxonomists to confirm that *H. albipunctella* was by far the most prevalent and damaging of all these species.



Figure 1. *Masalia nubila* (Hampson) female ovipositing on millet panicle.

During the course of the present project one species of *Masalia*, later identified as *Masalia nubila* (Hampson) (Figure 1), was observed frequently amongst the millet plots of the ICRISAT Sahelian Centre, and captured regularly in light traps. This species was normally present in lower numbers than *H. albipunctella*, but it was especially abundant during 1999, in a field season of abundant and frequent rains, when *H. albipunctella* was rare. It caused panicle damage in some on-station plots.

Larvae of *M. nubila* mine inside millet panicles in a similar fashion to *H. albipunctella*. The former species was reared successfully from egg to pupa on artificial diet in the lab. However, its larval development was found to proceed much more slowly than in *H. albipunctella*: from egg hatch to pupation took 60 days, compared to 29 days in *H.a.*

Whilst *M. nubila* probably does not merit pest status under normal conditions, it is important for researchers to recognise that heliothine moths other than *H. albipunctella* are present in millet fields, and that moth eggs laid on millet panicles are by no means guaranteed to be those of *H. albipunctella*.