

**A recent record of the predatory bush cricket
Saga pedo Pallas, 1771, in the Pouzdřanská step Steppe
(southern Moravia)**

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DVOŘÁK D., ROLEČEK J. & FAJMON K. 2008: A recent record of the predatory bush cricket *Saga pedo* Pallas, 1771, in the Pouzdřanská step Steppe (southern Moravia). *Acta Musei Moraviae, Scientiae biologicae* (Brno) 93: 7–9. – A recent record of the predatory bush cricket *Saga pedo* Pallas, 1771, in the Pouzdřanská step Steppe (southern Moravia, the Czech Republic) is reported. This is the second recent site for the species in the Czech Republic. The habitat of the species is described and the circumstances of the find are discussed.

Keywords. *Saga pedo*, faunistics, Czech Republic

Saga pedo (Pallas, 1771) is a large apterous tettigoniid inhabiting steppes and dry grasslands in the warm and dry regions of Eurasia. Its distribution range extends from the Iberian Peninsula in the west to Kazakhstan, western Siberia and China in the east. Its northern range limit runs through southern Moravia; the Moravian populations consist solely of females that reproduce asexually by parthenogenesis. *Saga pedo* is the largest species of the order Orthoptera occurring in the Czech Republic: body length including ovipositor may exceed 10 cm. As its English name indicates, it is a predatory species, feeding mostly on various species of Orthoptera. To date, it had been recorded at four sites in southern Moravia: Znojmo (a literature record from 1900), Pouzdřanská step Steppe (last record in 1946), Kamenný vrch Hill near Kurdějov (last record in 1979), and Pálava Hills (recently about ten microsites; Orthopteroid Specialist Group 1996, HOLUŠA 2006, HOLUŠA & KOČÁREK 2007, and personal communication by J. Holuša).

On 5 June 2008, we made a floristic survey of the Pouzdřanská step-Kolby National Nature Reserve. While walking along sunny slopes above the road connecting the villages of Pouzdřany and Popice (48°56'28" N, 16°38'32" E; 250 m a.s.l.), we noticed a large, green, wingless tettigoniid climbing up a stem of feather grass *Stipa pulcherrima* (nomenclature of vascular plants after KUBÁT *et al.* 2002). We identified it as *Saga pedo*, a species that we knew from the nearby Pálava Hills and from the Vértes Hills in Hungary. The individual found was a nymph with body length about 4 cm (not considering long antennae and ovipositor), green in colour, with a conspicuous, narrow, yellowish stripe along the side of the body. It had been devouring a small grasshopper and evaded us with some agility when we tried to capture it. As soon as it was finally captured, we took a documentary photo and set it free again (revised Holuša & Kočárek).

The habitat of the individual found can be described as continental feather grass steppe of the *Koelerio macranthae-Stipetum joannis* association, classified in



Fig. 1 Predatory bush cricket (*Saga pedo*) at Pouzdřanská step Steppe, southern Moravia (5 June 2008).

Obr. 1 Kobyłka sága na Pouzdřanské stepi (5. června 2008).

the *Festucion valesiacae* alliance (CHYTRÝ 2007). Along with the dominant *Stipa pulcherrima*, the following species were present: *Festuca valesiaca*, *Koeleria macrantha*, *Melica transsilvanica*, *Phleum phleoides*, *Achillea pannonica*, *Dianthus ponederae*, *Verbascum chaixii* subsp. *austriacum*, *Vincetoxicum hirsutaria*, *Asparagus officinalis*, *Stachys recta*, and others. The stand was about 70 cm tall and rather dense, though sparsely vegetated patches were present as well.

The find of *Saga pedo* in the Pouzdřanská step Steppe supports the assumption on the part of some experts that the species is still present in all its historical sites but has been overlooked due to low population densities (HOLUŠA 2006, HOLUŠA & KOČÁREK 2007). However, it is remarkable that it has not been observed for more than 60 years even at such a well-known and frequently visited site as the Pouzdřanská step Steppe. Taking into account the attractiveness of the species, we cannot exclude the possibility of its illegal amateur repatriation, as happened in the

surroundings of the town of Znojmo some time ago (P. KOČÁREK & J. HOLUŠA, *in litt.*).

Czech summary

Autoři popisují nález kobyšky ságy na Pouzdřanské stepi dne 5. června 2008. Jde o potvrzení výskytu druhu na lokalitě po 62 letech a o druhou recentně známou oblast výskytu druhu v České republice (tou první je Pálava s více mikropopulacemi). Nález byl fotograficky zdokumentován. Stanovištěm druhu je květnatá kavylová step na výslunných svazích nad silnicí z Pouzdřan do Popic. Dlouhodobou absencí dokladu o výskytu ságy na Pouzdřanské stepi lze vysvětlit specifickou biologií druhu, který u nás tvoří malé populace řídké roztroušených nepohlavně se rozmnožujících samic. Vzhledem k dobré prozkoumanosti území a atraktivitě druhu však nelze vyloučit ani amatérskou reintrodukcí.

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Saga pedo Pallas, 1771, in southern Moravia



Fig. 2 Pouzdřanská step-Kolby National Nature Reserve. Predatory bush cricket was spotted on sunny slopes dominated by *Stipa pulcherrima* above the road connecting Pouzdřany and Popice villages.

Obr. 2 NPR Pouzdřanská step-Kolby. Sága byla nalezena na výslunných svazích porostlých stepí s dominancí kavylu sličného (*Stipa pulcherrima*) nad silnicí z Pouzdřan do Popic.

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