

SHORTER CONTRIBUTIONS

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AN OBSCURE SAWFLY, *KERITA FIDALA* ROSS (HYMENOPTERA: TENTHREDINIDAE), NEW TO VIRGINIA, A LEAFMINER OF VIRGINIA BLUEBELL, *MERTENSIA VIRGINICA* (L.) PERS. EX LINK (BORAGINACEAE). – *Kerita fidala* was described from Illinois by Ross (1937) without host information. It was later recorded to “leaf mine in *Mertensia*” by Ross (1951) and from “*Mertensia virginica* (L.)” by Maxwell (1955). Smith (1976) added Indiana to its distribution in a revision of the genus. These constitute the only distribution and host plant records of this sawfly. The only other two species of *Kerita* were described by Smith (1976), *K. atira* and *K. difala*, both from western North America, but their host plants are unknown. Specimens of *K. fidala* recently collected in Turkey Run Park, Fairfax County, Virginia, represent a new state record which can be added to the list of Virginia sawflies (Smith, 2006) under Tenthredinidae, Nematinae, page 10.

Kerita fidala is a small, ca. 4 mm long, black sawfly with white tegulae and pale orange legs. Adults fly in early spring, 5-28 April in Illinois and Indiana (Smith, 1976) and the end of March and in April in Fairfax County. Its apparent rarity probably is due to its small size, early flight period, and restricted habitat. Therefore, it easily can be missed during general collecting.

Specimens were collected at Turkey Run Park, in Malaise traps on the floodplain of the Potomac River near extensive beds of Virginia bluebell, *Mertensia virginica* (L.) Pers. ex Link (Boraginaceae). Specimen data are as follows: USA: Virginia, Fairfax Co., Turkey Run trap, 38° 57.9' N, 77° 09.4' W, 29 March-25 April 2007, D. Smith, Malaise trap (1♀), same except 12 March-2 April 2008 (1♀), 3-16 April 2008 (3♀); USA: Virginia, Fairfax Co., Turkey Run, west trap, 38° 57.968'N, 77° 09.674'W, 13-28 March 2007, D. Smith, Malaise trap (1♀), same except 3-16 April 2008 (1♀); USA: Virginia, Fairfax Co., Turkey Run, stream trap, 38° 57.931'N, 77° 09.70'W, 3-16 April 2008, D. Smith, Malaise trap (1♀). Specimens are deposited in the collection of the National Park Service (George Washington Memorial Parkway) at Turkey Run Park, Virginia, and the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Kerita fidala has not been reported as a pest of Virginia bluebell even though the bluebell is often a garden plant. Nothing is known about either the insect's life history or the type of larval mine it produces.

Adults presumably fly around or near the host plants concurrently with early spring growth. They were found only in three traps adjacent to extensive beds of *Mertensia*. No specimens were caught in four other traps in Turkey Run and Great Falls parks, nor during my extensive collections in Virginia (Smith, 2006). Shortly after flight, some type of mine must appear in the host leaves. This could be a blotch mine or serpentine mine which must discolor the leaf in some way. Mines may be easier to find than adults and could be apparent toward the end of April and first part of May. Collection records indicate that *K. fidala* is univoltine. Further observations will be of interest in learning more about this sawfly.

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- David R. Smith
Systematic Entomology Laboratory, ARS, USDA
c/o National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
P.O. Box 37012, MRC 168
Washington, DC 20013-7012