



Ricania japonica

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Ricania japonica (Japanese Planthopper/ Japon Yaprakçekirgesi) from Çayeli, Rize - 27.07.2009.

I've come across this moth-like in shape (but not moth), phytophagous insect (the wing span: approx 2 cm) during my Black Sea Region trip. I've thought that it may be a Cicadellid since its triangular pronotum shape and stubby head structure, but I could not be sure. Thanks to web surfing I reached its name eventually. I also photographed its interesting shaped nymphal stages.

This species is a member of the family Ricaniidae. It was firstly recorded on the cultural plants from Turkey in Çayeli (Rize province, Eastern Black Sea Region) in 2007 **as R. simulans erroneously** by agricultural engineers. Additional surveying leaded up to its reel name in 2009 (Demir, 2009). It is also distributed in Japan , N China, Georgia?, Korea, Oriental region and Ukraine.

Ricaniidae is a group of homopteran (sometimes Hemipteran) insects, containing over 40 genera and 400 species world-wide. Thus, they are one of the smaller families in the planthopper superfamily (Fulgoroidea). The highest diversity is in tropical Africa and Asia and in Australia, with a few species occurring in the Palearctic.

The “planthopper” name comes from their remarkable resemblance to leaves and other plants of their environment and from the fact that they often “hop” for quick transportation in a similar way to that of grasshoppers. However, these planthoppers generally walk very slowly so as not to attract attention. Distributed worldwide, all members of this group are plant-feeders, though surprisingly few are considered pests. These are most reliably distinguished from the other members by two features; the bifurcate (“Y”-shaped) anal vein in the forewing, and the thickened, three-segmented antennae, with a generally round or egg-shaped second segment (pedicel) that bears a fine filamentous arista.

Nymphs of many planthoppers produce wax and waxy filaments (breaking easily) from special glands on the abdominal terga and other parts of the body. These are hydrophobic and help conceal the insects -as a camouflage covering-. Adult females of many families also produce wax which may be used to protect eggs. Planthoppers are often vectors for plant diseases, especially phytoplasmas (specialised bacteria that are obligate parasites) which live in the phloem of plants and can be transmitted by planthoppers when feeding.

References: 1. Demir, E. (2009). *Ricania* Germar, 1818 Species Of Western Palaearctic Region (Hemiptera: Fulgoromorpha: Ricaniidae). *Mun. Ent. Zool.* 4 (1): 271-275. 2. [Wikipedia](#). 3. [Insects of Japan](#).

