

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR THE CAPTURE AND BREEDING OF THE LARGEST CERAMBYCID "MACRODONTIA CERVICORNIS" IN THE PERUVIAN WILD FOREST

By

Pedro PAPRZYCKI

(Satipo — Perú.)

These gigantic Cerambycidae whose male specimens may reach a length up to 17 cm, are still lacking in many collections.

They feed exclusively on wood; their mating and deposition of eggs only takes place on the *Unguravia* palm-trees cut down or standing even to this time, but which have already dried up.

They are nocturnal fliers. Occasionally they may be found, however, on the trunks of these palm-trees during the day. They are solitary fliers and have never been found in groups. When fresh feeding-spots are noticed on some felled trunk of a palm-tree, one must look round on this trunk if one can meet such a wonderful animal by chance. They are easily removed from the trunk. But one had better take precautions in order that the beetle cannot reach our fingers with its enormous and strong mandibles; for the bite of the *Macrodonia cervicornis* is not very agreeable and is not so easy to get free one's bleeding fingers.

These giants are killed by an injection of strong alcohol, or placing them into a jar which contains cyanide of potassium. But one must not put more than *one* male animal into the glass with the poison lest the animals, in their death-struggle, hurt one another—especially their antennas and legs—with their big mandibles.

If, casually, one has not at hand any of these two means of killing the beetles, it is advisable to wrap some thread or the thin fibre of a creeping-plant (*vejuco*) which is available everywhere in the wild forest, tightly round the animal—particularly about its dangerous mandibles—in order to convey the prey home, entire and safe.

As these beetles have also a great number of enemies (birds, snakes, etc.), we may explain the fact that they are only seldom found.

A much better "hunting-success" can be obtained when one seeks the larva for breeding the *Macrodonia cervicornis* from that stage.

In order to avoid shortcomings at the breeding, there must be employed only big and well developed caterpillars. These are found in the palm-trees which had been cut down at least two years ago. These semi-rotten palms are split with an axe and afterwards one may look for the larvae.

The larvae of the *Macrodonia cervicornis* are white in their evolutionary stage; they need approximately two years for obtaining their adult stage, and in the course of this time, change also the colour of their skin which becomes yellow first and, in the entirely adult larvae, turns brownish.

The adult larvae are also recognized by the fact that they are firm and tough, while the other ones feel soft and flabby.

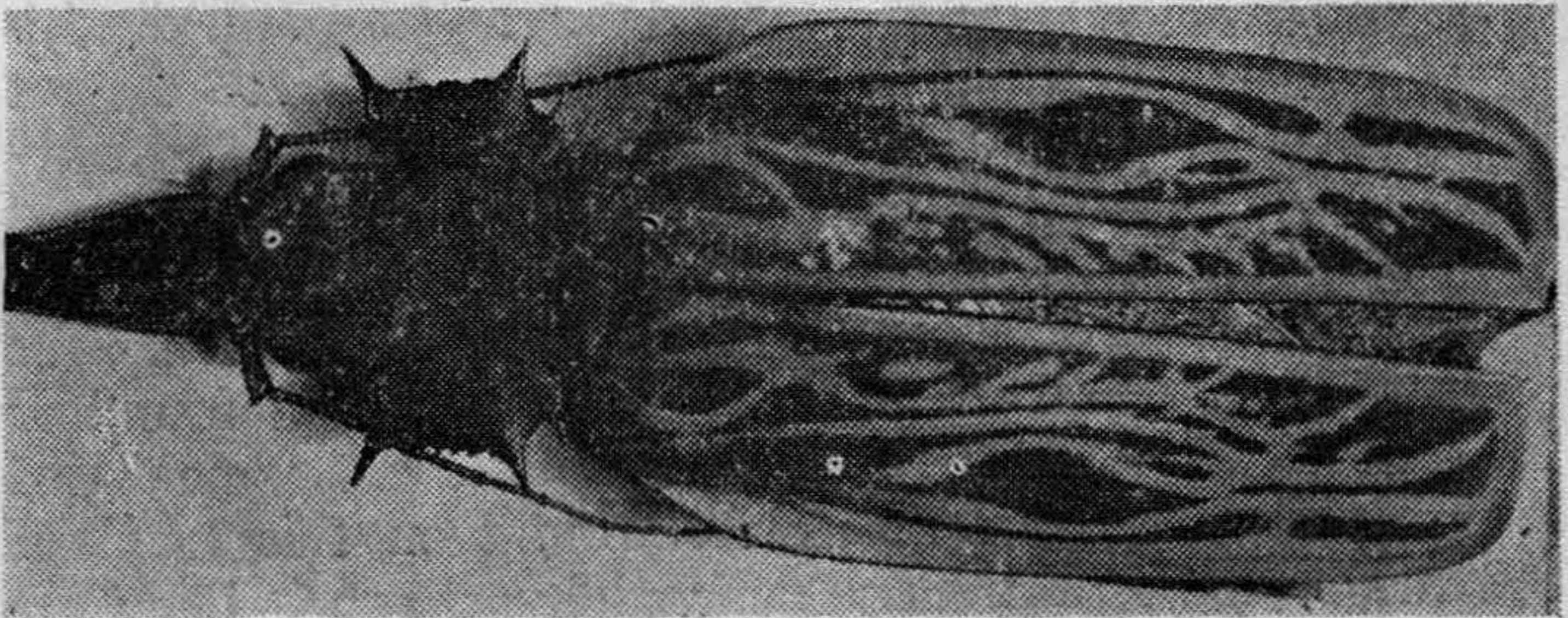


Fig. 29: *Macrodonia cervicornis* (Orig.).

It is necessary to keep the larvae, which one has found, separated to prevent them from biting each other; for hurt larvae die at the breeding.

As a breeding-jar one may simply use big kerosenetins. These are filled with fresh earth to the extent of half. Sandy or too clayey earth is not suitable for the breeding. Its condition must be so that the larvae, before moulting into nymphs, be able to build a vault on the inside in which the process of transformation takes place.

Too moist an earth forms molds and the larvae will rot.

Now the larvae are put into the breeding-jar; but it is not advisable to place more than four specimens into one jar, because in this case not all the larvae will be able to find an adequate space and will disturb each other during the change into chrysalis.

When the larvae have buried themselves in the soil, they must not be agitated any longer for fear that the larvae be not attacked by mites.

The breeding-jars must be kept indoors at a shadowy place in order to protect them from rain and sunshine; for the free larvae in the wild forest seek similar places, below the leaves, for their transformation.

Now one has only to wait 3 to 4 months. In order to be sure, one may record the date. During all this time one must never sprinkle the earth with water, as is the case when breeding sphynghides, because the larvae of the *Macrodon-tia* would rot.

About in the fourth month appear the adult *Macrodon-tia cervicornis* in the breeding-jar. As these animals usually emerge from the ground in the night, it is practical to cover up the breeding-jar in order that the animal cannot fly away.

With a numerous breeding, one has also the opportunity of observing and preserving the various stages, because just these exist still rarely in the Museums.

Naturally this material must be conserved in alcohol.

In a similar way one can also breed other big beetles of the wild forest.

