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A preliminary survey of predatory Coccinellids of cardamom (*Elattaria cardamomum* Maton) and cocoa (*Theobroma cacao* L.) fields in Matale

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Aphids are considered as important pests of cocoa and cardamom in several countries but in Sri Lanka aphids are the minor pests to cocoa and cardamom. One of the reasons for this may be the natural control of aphids by their natural enemies. Coccinellids or ladybird beetles belonging to family *Coccinellidae* are commonly known predatory insects of many sucking insect pests such as aphids.

A field survey was carried out in the 25 years old cocoa and five years old cardamom fields of Matale in 2007 to collect and report lady bird fauna of the plantations. Each field was sampled repeatedly at by-weekly intervals throughout January to December 2007. Adults and immature stages of predatory coccinellids were collected by hand picking, using insect nets and by using an aspirator. Beetles were dry preserved or wet preserved in 70% ethanol. Beetles were morphologically characterized and were identified using taxonomic keys and literatures.

Six different species of lady bird beetles namely, *Pseudaspidimerus flaviceps* (Walker), *Jauravia* sp., *Pseudoscymnus* sp., *Cryptogonus orbiculus* var. *fulvocinctus* (Mulsant), *Scymnus* (Pullus) sp. and *Stethorus* sp. were recorded in the study.

Pseudaspidimerus flaviceps (Walker) was found as the predator of cocoa aphid *Toxoptera aurantii* (Boyer de Fonscolombe) and other five species were collected from cardamom fields. Among them *Jauravia* sp. was the more frequently seen coccinellid beetle found in this study. Further studies are under way to exploit the host and the relative efficiency of these predators in the pest control.

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