First Nordic record of *Pandava laminata* (Araneae: Titanoecidae), with a synopsis of anthropochorous species of spiders in Finland

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Abstract. The alien spider species *Pandava laminata* (Thorell, 1878) (Titanoecidae) is reported from the Nordic Region for the first time, based on a single female specimen collected in an apartment in Turku, Southwest Finland. Widely distributed in its potentially native range from East Africa through China to New Guinea and Polynesia, this species has previously been introduced to central, western and northwestern Europe through the import of ornamental plants. The specimen is illustrated with photographs, and a synopsis of obligatory synanthropic, alien, and stowaway spider species reported from Finland is provided. Additionally, previous Finnish records of introduced black widow spiders identified as *Latrodectus* sp. and *L. mactans* (Fabricius, 1775) are reattributed here to *L. hesperus* Chamberlin & Ivie, 1935 (Theridiidae) based on the geographical origin of the vector.

Keywords: Alien species, fauna, introduced species, *Latrodectus*, stowaway species, synanthropes.

Zusammenfassung. Erster nordischer Nachweis von *Pandava laminata* (Araneae: Titanoecidae), mit einer Synopsis anthropogen verschleppter Spinnenarten in Finnland. Die nichtheimische Spinnenart *Pandava laminata* (Thorell, 1878) (Titanoecidae) wird zum ersten Mal aus den Nordischen Ländern gemeldet, basierend auf einem einzelnen weiblichen Exemplar aus einer Wohnung in Turku, südwestliches Finnland. Die Art hat ein möglicherweise großes natürliches Verbreitungsgebiet das von Ostafrika über China bis nach Neuguinea und Polynesien reicht. Vorherige Einschleppungen der Art nach Mittel-, West- und Nordwesteuropa sind über den Import von Zierpflanzen belegt. Zusätzlich zu dem fotografisch illustrierten Exemplar wird eine Synopsis obligat synanthroper, nichtheimischer und verschleppter Spinnenarten aus Finnland präsentiert. Des Weiteren werden vorherige Einschleppungen von Schwarzen Witwen, bisher bestimmt als *Latrodectus* sp. und *L. mactans* (Fabricius, 1775), *L. hesperus* Chamberlin & Ivie, 1935 (Theridiidae) basierend auf der Herkunft des Vektors zugeordnet.

Introduced species, also known as alien species, are organisms that have been transported into an area outside their native range, usually as a result of human activity. These introductions can be intentional (e.g. for agriculture, horticulture or pest control) or accidental (e.g. through transportation, shipping or trade). Once introduced, some species establish populations in their new environment and spread beyond the initial area of introduction – a process known as naturalization. Many alien species are restricted to human settlements and can only survive as synanthropes. While some introduced species integrate without significant impact, others may become invasive, competing or hybridizing with native species, altering ecosystems, and causing ecological or economic damage (e.g. Evans et al. 2011, Nedvěd et al. 2011, Houser et al. 2014, Nentwig 2018). Despite their significant role in biodiversity decline (e.g. Davis 2003, Clavero et al. 2009, McGeoch et al. 2010), the introduction pathways and ecological impact of many alien species remain very poorly studied (Kobelt & Nentwig 2008, Nentwig 2015, Faulkner et al. 2020).

Research on alien spider species and their mechanisms of introduction on a global scale remains limited. Nentwig (2015), in his comprehensive analysis of 184 spider species reported as alien in Europe over the past two centuries, identified three primary pathways for their introduction: fruit shipments, potted plants, and containers or packaging material. While fruit shipments from the 1950s to the 1970s accounted for nearly two-thirds of all introduced spider species in the analysis conducted by Nentwig (2015), they exhibited very low rates of establishment. In contrast, more recent species introductions via potted plants and packaging materials have been lower in absolute numbers but have shown a much higher rate of subsequent establishment.

The titanoecid spider *Pandava laminata* (Thorell, 1878) is a relatively recent introduction to Europe, where it appears to have already become established (Nentwig 2015). Potentially native to tropical regions of East Africa and South to Southeast Asia, its first introduction to Europe was documented in Germany (Jäger 2008), followed by Hungary (Pfliegler et al. 2012), Poland, the Netherlands (Rozwałka & Bielak-Bielecki 2017), the United Kingdom (Parker 2020; Fig. 1), and Ireland (Nolan & Dillon 2022). Recently, a female specimen of this species was found in an apartment in Turku, Southwest Finland. This record, which represents the first documented occurrence of *P. laminata* in the Nordic region, is documented herein, accompanied by a synopsis of obligatory synanthropic, alien, and stowaway spider species reported from Finland. Additionally, previous Finnish records of introduced specimens identified as *Latrodectus* sp. and *L. mactans* (Fabricius, 1775) are reattributed here to *L. hesperus* Chamberlin & Ivie, 1935 (Theridiidae), based on the Californian origin of these introductions (Scharff et al. 2021).

Material and methods

The specimen was collected as a juvenile while walking on the floor of an apartment in February 2024. It was housed in a small plastic enclosure (5 × 5 × 5.5 cm) at a temperature of 19-21°C until its death in December 2024. During this period, it moulted twice, reached adulthood and constructed an egg sac with unfertilized eggs. Its web was lightly misted with water once a week, and the spider was fed every two weeks with fruit flies or small crickets. The individual was discovered dead a few days post-mortem and subsequently transferred to 70% ethanol; however, it had already partially desiccated by that time (Fig. 2a).

Photographs were taken using an Olympus Camedia E-520 camera attached to an Olympus SZX16 stereomicroscope. Digital images of different focal planes were stacked

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Fig. 1: Female of *Pandava laminata*, from Gloucester, UK. Photo: Tone Killick

with Helicon Focus™ 8.1.1. The epigyne was photographed after digesting tissues off in a 10% KOH aqueous solution. The specimen is deposited at the Zoological Museum of the University of Turku (ZMUT).

Results

Titanoecidae Lehtinen, 1967

Pandava Lehtinen, 1967

Pandava laminata (Thorell, 1878) (Figs 1, 2a-c)

Pandava laminata: Jäger 2008: 4, figs 1-9 (♂♀).

For a complete list of 23 taxonomic entries, see World Spider Catalog (2025).

Material examined. FINLAND, Varsinais-Suomi: 1 ♀ (ZMUT), Turku, Turun Ylioppilaskylä [Turku Student Village], 60.4500°N, 22.2833°E, 42.0 m a.s.l., Feb. 2024 (leg. A. Zamani).

Diagnosis and description. See Almeida-Silva et al. (2010). Habitus as in Fig. 1, 2a; epigyne as in Fig. 2b, c.

Distribution. Tanzania, Kenya, Madagascar, India, Sri Lanka to China, Indonesia, Philippines, Micronesia and French Polynesia. Introduced to the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Hungary (World Spider Catalog 2025, Nolan & Dillon 2022) and Finland (the present paper).

Discussion

Currently, more than 650 species of spiders are known from Finland (Nentwig et al. 2025). Information on obligatory synanthropic, alien, and stowaway species reported from Finland, including their native ranges and areas of introduction or occurrence within the country, is summarized in Tab. 1. Since the start of the 21st century, several native European species have been documented in Finland for the first time, such as the araneids *Argiope bruennichi* (Scopoli, 1772), *Neoscona adianta* (Walckenaer, 1802) (Koponen et al. 2007), *Mangora acalypha* (Walckenaer, 1802) (Fritzén et al. 2016), and *Gibbaranea gibbosa* (Walckenaer, 1802) (Zamani et al. 2022a), as well as the cheiracanthiid *Cheiracanthium punctorium* (Villers, 1789) (Zamani et al. 2022b). These are likely the result of climate-induced range shifts and, as such, are not considered introductions within the context of this study (see also Fritzén et al. 2016).

Some synanthropic species have established populations in Finland, while the majority of alien species have not been

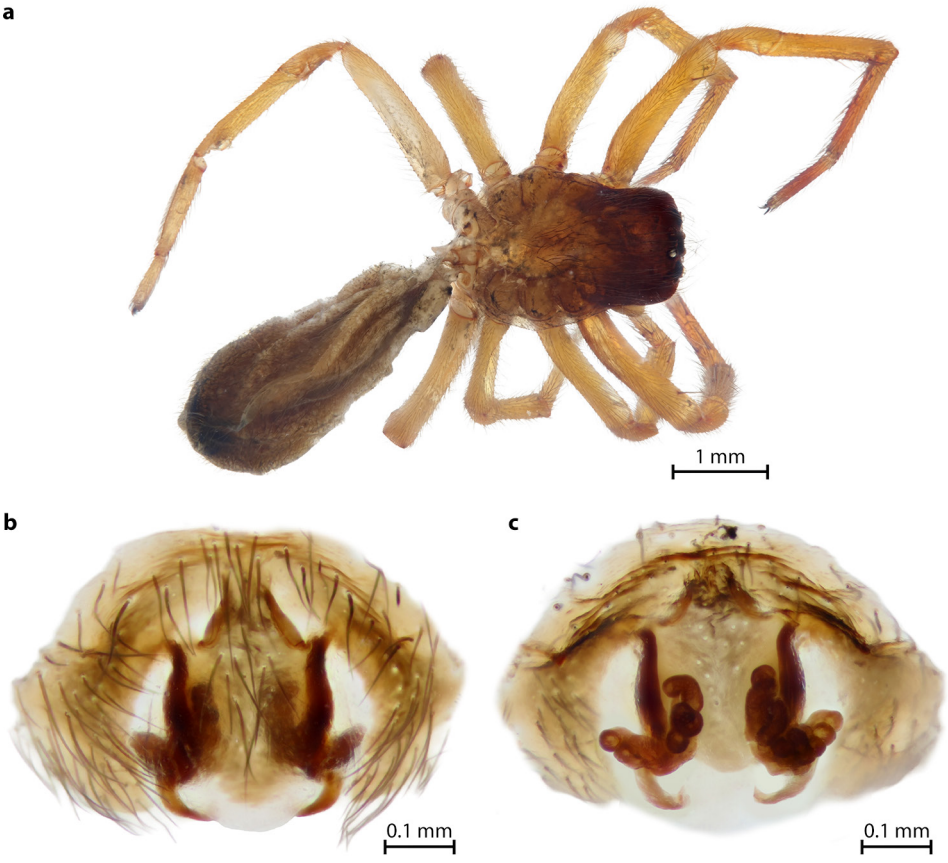

Fig. 2: Female of *Pandava laminata*, from Turku, FI. **a.** habitus, dorsal view; **b.** cleared epigyne, ventral view; **c.** ibid., dorsal view

able to do so. A few have formed temporary local populations, such as the amaurobiid *Amaurobius ferox* (Walckenaer, 1830) and the pholcid *Smeringopus pallidus* (Blackwall, 1858). Interestingly, the sicariid *Loxosceles laeta* (Nicolet, 1849), introduced to Helsinki more than 50 years ago (Huhta 1972), has maintained a permanent population in the same building, with specimens sampled as recently as 2022 (T. Pajunen, pers. comm.), and no observations reported from other locations. Records of certain introduced species, such as the agelenid *Eratigena atrica* (C. L. Koch, 1843) and the pholcid *Pholcus phalangioides* (Fuesslin, 1775), have notably increased over the past decade.

Outside of its native range, introduced populations of *P. laminata* are currently known only from Europe. In all areas of introduction, the species has been reported to be confined to hothouses, garden centres, flower shops and markets with potted plants, particularly orchids, imported from the Netherlands seemingly being the main route of introduction (Rozwałka & Bielak-Bielecki 2017, Parker 2020). Previously, Jäger (2008) suggested that spreading of this species to human dwellings would be unlikely due to the low humidity in these environments. The specimen reported here is the first collected from within a house. It is possible that it was transported to the apartment via one of the four potted plants brought there a few months earlier, with no indication of an established population in this house. Another potential route of introduction is through boxes of crickets imported from the Netherlands by a local pet store. These boxes are regularly transported to the apartment where *P. laminata* was found; a female *Steatoda grossa* (C.L. Koch, 1838) and an unidentified juvenile philodromid were also found in similar packages from the same store. The current record further suggests an expansion in the range of *P. laminata* in Europe, and it is likely that the species will, or has already, become widespread across the continent, with additional records expected in the coming years.

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Tab. 1: Obligatory synanthropic, alien, and stowaway species of spiders reported from Finland. In addition to the selected references mentioned, the databases of ZMUT, the Finnish Biodiversity Information Facility (FinBIF) (https://laji.fi/en/taxon/MX.70198) and iNaturalist (https://www.inaturalist.org/) were used.

Family/Species	[Likely] Origin	Records in Finland	Environment of occurrence in Finland	Established	References	Comments
Agelenidae						
Eratigena atrica (C.L. Koch, 1843)	Europe	Southern to Central Finland	Buildings, rarely outdoors	Yes	Huhta (1972)	North to Oulu (65°N)
Eratigena duellica (Simon, 1875)	Europe	Southern Finland	Buildings	Probably	Terhivuo (1993)	-
Eratigena saeva (Blackwall, 1844)	Europe	Helsinki region, Raisio	Buildings	No	Terhivuo (1993)	-
Tegenaria parietina (Fourcroy, 1785)	Europe	Lohja	Factory	No	Pajunen et al. (2008)	-
Amaurobiidae						
Amaurobius ferox (Walckenaer, 1830)	Europe	Turku region	Building	No	Koponen (1997b)	Temporary population
Ctenidae						
Anahita lycosina (Simon, 1897)	Africa	Helsinki region	Banana shipment	No	Hackman (1960)	-
Ctenus (?) sp(p.)	South America	Helsinki region	Banana shipment	No	Hackman (1960)	-
Filistatidae						
Filistata cf. *insidiatrix* (Forsskål, 1775)	Europe	Vantaa	Building	No	iNaturalist [observation ID:200904246]	A single male specimen, presumably introduced via a fruit shipment from Spain.
Gnaphosidae						
Scotophaeus quadripunctatus (Linnaeus, 1758)	Europe	Helsinki (Suomenlinna)	Fortress	No	Albrecht et al. (2014); T. Pajunen (pers.comm.)	-
Sosticus loricatus (L. Koch, 1866)	Asia	Kouvola	Building	No	Huhta (1972)	-
Linyphiidae						
Ostearius melanopygius (O. Pickard-Cambridge, 1880)	Australia or New Zealand	Southern to Central Finland	Buildings	Yes	Huhta et al. (1979); Pajunen et al. (2008)	-

Family/Species	[Likely] Origin	Records in Finland	Environment of occurrence in Finland	Established	References	Comments
Nesticidae						
Howaia mogera (Yaginuma, 1972)	Asia	Turku	Greenhouse	Probably	Koponen et al. (2016)	-
Oecobiidae						
Oecobius navus Blackwall, 1859	Europe	Southern Finland, Oulu	Buildings	Yes	Fritzén (2013)	-
Oonopidae						
Triaeris stenaspis Simon, 1891	Africa	Turku	Greenhouse	No	Koponen (1997a)	The area of introduction was destroyed in 1997.
Pholcidae						
Pholcus phalangioides (Fuesslin, 1775)	Asia	Southern to Central Finland	Buildings, hothouses	Yes	Terhivuo (2002); Koponen et al. (2015)	-
Psilochorus simoni (Berland, 1911)	America	Southern to Central Finland	Buildings	Yes	Huhta (1972)	-
Smeringopus pallidus (Blackwall, 1858)	Africa	Turku	Aquarium store	No	Koponen (2014)	Temporary population
Salticidae						
Hasarius adansoni (Audouin, 1826)	Africa or the Middle East	Helsinki	Greenhouse	No	Hackman (1955)	-
Sicariidae						
Loxosceles laeta (Nicolet, 1849)	South America	Helsinki	Building	Yes	Huhta (1972)	Only one population known
Sparassidae						
Barylestis occidentalis (Simon, 1887)	Africa	Helsinki region	Banana shipment	No	Hackman (1960)	-
Barylestis scutatus (Pocock, 1903)	Africa	Helsinki region	Banana shipment	No	Hackman (1960)	-
Barylestis variatus (Pocock, 1900)	Africa	Helsinki region	Banana shipment	No	Hackman (1960)	-
Barylestis nr. *variatus*	Africa	Helsinki region	Banana shipment	No	Hackman (1960)	-
Heteropoda venatoria (Linnaeus, 1767)	Asia	Helsinki region	Banana shipment	No	Hackman (1960)	-
Theraphosidae						
Avicularia (?) sp(p.)	South America	Helsinki	Banana shipment	No	Hackman (1960)	-
Theridiidae						
Coleosoma floridanum Banks, 1900	Americas	Turku	Greenhouse	No	Koponen (1990)	The area of introduction was destroyed in 1997.
Latrodectus hesperus Chamberlin & Ivie, 1935	North America	Helsinki, Joensuu, Naantali, Porvoo, Turku	Imported vehicles	No	Pajunen et al. (2008)	*
Parasteatoda tepidariorum (C.L. Koch, 1841)	Asia	Southern to Central Finland	Greenhouses, buildings	Yes	Palmgren (1974)	North to Oulu
Steatoda castanea (Clerck, 1757)	Europe	Southern to Central Finland	Buildings	Yes	Palmgren (1974)	-
Steatoda grossa (C.L. Koch 1838)	Europe	Southern Finland	Buildings	Probably	Huhta (1972)	-
Steatoda paykulliana (Walckenaer, 1806)	Europe	Helsinki, Turku	Fruit shipment	No	Pajunen et al. (2008)	-
Titanoecidae						
Pandava laminata (Thorell, 1878)	Asia	Turku	Building	Unknown	Present data	-
Uloboridae						
Uloborus plumipes Lucas, 1846	Europe or Africa	Southern to Central Finland	Buildings, garden centres, flower stores	Yes	Pajunen et al. (2008)	North to Oulu

* The records of *Latrodectus* sp. and *L. mactans* (Fabricius, 1775) by Pajunen et al. (2008) are reattributed here to *L. hesperus*. All these individuals were transported to Finland in cars imported from California, where *L. hesperus* is widely distributed, commonly found, and the only black-coloured species of the genus (Schraft et al. 2021).