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***Pelocoris balius* La Rivers (Hemiptera: Heteroptera: Naucoridae) in Florida: New Status of an Enigmatic Saucer Bug**

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Abstract

The saucer bug subspecies *Pelocoris femoratus balius* La Rivers was described from east-central Florida and differs from the nominate subspecies by pronounced dark spotting on the fore femora, head, and pronotum. This subspecies is much less commonly encountered than is *P. f. femoratus* (Palisot de Beauvois), which occurs throughout Florida. Although both subspecies occur in the area, uncertainty about the taxonomic status of *P. f. balius* has persisted. I here elevate *P. f. balius* to full species status based on collections of both taxa from the same bodies of water in multiple counties and additional morphological differences to those given in the original description. A supplemental description, distribution map, and illustrations to distinguish between the two species are provided.

Key words: Florida, Nepomorpha, Naucoridae, *Pelocoris*

Introduction

The genus *Pelocoris* is the sole member of the family Naucoridae in the eastern United States and Canada. Of the three described species in the U.S., the most widespread is *P. femoratus* (Palisot de Beauvois), which has been reported from Ontario south to Florida and west to Texas (Sites & Polhemus 1995). Reports of its occurrence as far south as Uruguay (Polhemus and Polhemus 1988) almost certainly pertain to South American congeners. In the U.S., *P. femoratus* is not known to occur further southwest than eastern Texas (Sites & Polhemus 1995) and it has not been recorded with certainty from Central America (Roback and Nieser 1974). The other two congeners in the U.S. are *P. carolinensis* Torre-Bueno, which occurs along the southeastern U.S. seaboard from North Carolina to Texas, and *P. biimpressus* Montandon, which occurs in southern Texas, Arizona, California, Nevada, and south to Central America (Sites & Polhemus 1995).

Pelocoris f. femoratus occurs commonly throughout Florida and is known locally as the alligator flea. In east-central Florida, populations of *Pelocoris* with densely spotted forelegs and pronotum were described as the subspecies *Pelocoris femoratus balius* La Rivers (1970). I here elevate this subspecies to full species status.

Material and methods

Samples were collected using an aquatic net to sweep through submerged vegetation along shorelines of streams, ponds, and swamps in Florida. Photographs of a recent collection site designated as L-1827 are available in a Locality Image Database via a link from the internet site of the Enns Entomology Museum, University of Missouri. Length and width are given as a mean and range and all measurements are in mm. Length of the body is measured from the anterior margin of the head to the posterior margin of the abdomen, and width at the widest point, usually the embolium and abdominal segment II.

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