

Colorado Insect of Interest

Bumble Flower Beetle

Scientific Name: *Euphoria inda* (L.)

Order: Coleoptera (Beetles)

Family: Scarabaeidae (Scarab Beetles, Dung Beetles, Chafers, May/June Beetles)



Figure 1. Bumble flower beetle adults in thistle flower.

Identification and Descriptive Features:

These are broadly oval beetles, about 12-15 mm long. The general color ranges from yellow-brown to dark reddish brown. Dark spots pattern the body, which is also densely covered with yellowish-brown hairs. Adults are strong fliers and may make an audible buzzing noise in flight.

Distribution in Colorado: Common in eastern Colorado

Life History and Habits: The overwintering stage is the adult beetle which burrows into the soil for cover during the fall. In spring the beetles emerge, mate and females seek sites of moist decaying organic matter to lay eggs. Horse or cattle manure, rotten wood, and other moist, decaying plant matter are common sites for egg laying. (Compost piles also sometimes are colonized by these insects.) The C-shaped grubs feed almost exclusively on these materials, although they have been known to chew roots of container grown shrubs that were growing in organic matter-rich media. When full grown the larvae tamp out earthen chambers in which they pupate.



Figure 2. Bumble flower beetle larvae in horse manure compost.

The adults emerge a few weeks later and can be found from mid-summer into early fall. The adult beetles feed on a wide variety of sweet or fermenting liquids. They are commonly attracted in late summer to the bacterial ooze produced by infection of many trees, sometimes massing in large numbers on trunks or branches in late summer. (Despite its occurrence at the site of this ooze, bumble flower beetles are not involved in the transmission or development of the underlying plant diseases that result in ooze production.) They are also attracted to ripening



Figure 3. Bumble flower beetles feeding on ooze from tree.



Figure 4. Bumble flower beetle feeding on ripe grape. Photograph courtesy of Harold Larsen.

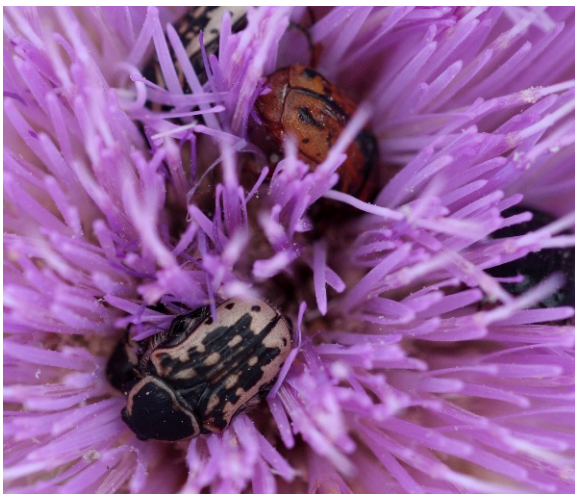


Figure 5. *Euphoria kerni* feeding at thistle flower. Note the highly variable coloration of this species.

corn, and ripe or overripe apples, grapes, melons, peaches. The pollen and nectar of flowers such as sunflower, strawflower, thistles and daylily are also eaten by the adults. With cold weather they move into the soil for overwintering. There is one generation produced per year.

Related Species: Four or five *Euphoria* species are probably occur in Colorado, including the bumble flower beetle. Most widespread is *Euphoria kernii* Haldeman, a common species found in flowers of rangeland plants in eastern Colorado through early summer. It has a considerable range of colors and is patterned with dark spotting. A very dark species known from northeast Colorado is *Euphoria sepulcralis* (F.). Likely also present in sandy soils of northeastern Colorado is *Euphoria pilipennis* (Kraatz). *Euphoria hirtipes* Horn may also be present in eastern Colorado, and has the unusual habit of developing amongst the large mounds of debris produced by *Formica* spp. ants (i.e., “field ants” or “thatcher ants”).



Figure 6. *Euphoria sepulcralis*, a dark colored species found in northeastern Colorado.

