

# Sunflower Headclipping Weevil

**Scientific Name:** *MHaplorhynchies aeneus*  
(Boheman)

**Order:** Coleoptera (Beetles)

**Family:** Curculionidae (Weevils)

**Identification and Descriptive Features:** The sunflower headclipping weevil is a shiny black, slightly hairy weevil with a prominent proboscis (snout) that projects forward. Total body length is approximately 1 cm. Although the insect is relatively uncommonly seen, it produces a very characteristic and recognizable partial severing of the flower heads of host plants.

**Distribution in Colorado:** Widespread in eastern Colorado. It is an occasional pest of gardens and is a minor pest of cultivated sunflower crops, usually limiting injury to field edges.

**Life History and Habits:** The sunflower head clipping weevil is most often seen associated with common sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*). However related Heliantinae plants in the genus *Silphium* also are native hosts and coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) is occasionally injured by this insect.

Adults emerge in early summer and may be seen on young buds and emerging flowers by early July. After mating, the female makes a series of cuts on the stem below a developing flower, partially severing it so that the flower hangs. Adults may then often be seen in the severed flower head where they feed on pollen. Eggs are laid at the



**Figure 1 (top).** Female sunflower headclipping weevil.

**Figure 2 (lower).** Typical damage to developing flower produced by sunflower head clipping weevil.



**Figure 3.** Sunflower headclipping weevil making stem cut on sunflower. A gray sunflower seed weevil is below and to the right.

base of the flowers and the early stage grubs feed on the flowers, pollen and decaying tissues.

Severed heads usually drop to the ground and larval development continues within the fallen heads. In October, the full-grown larvae leave the plants and burrow into the soil where they spend the winter. Pupation occurs late the following spring. One generation is produced annually.