

**THE GREY SUNFLOWER WEEVIL, *SMICRONYX SORDIDUS***

David E. Bragg  
WSU Entomology  
P O Box 377  
Pomeroy, WA 99347  
[braggd@wsu.edu](mailto:braggd@wsu.edu)  
(509) 843-2379

The Grey Sunflower Weevil is a very small member of the Genus *Smicronyx*, which are about 4 mm in length. There are 70 species in this genus, all of which bore in plants and cause galls.

Another species is the Red Sunflower Weevil, common in the Northern Great Plains. This small size coupled with a later invasion of *Helianthus annuus* makes this complex much greater as pest species in the Northern Plains where commercial black oil sunflower production is important as a crop. *Smicronyx sordidus* appeared in my garden in the summer of 2013. This is another complex of closely related species.

They are very elusive when any potential predator approaches, moving behind stems or dropping to the ground.

They also bite oviposition holes at the leaf axils of elongating plants. The larvae are tiny and are similar to those of artichoke weevil reported previously.

As the season progresses the plants wilt and fail to produce seed. Some healthier plants will develop seed heads but weevil adults will feed in the heads and emerge. Apparently they overwinter in the soil.

Commercial fields are sprayed at the appearance of adults in the late spring. Mechanical controls including tillage and crop removal are essential.

Sunflower is produced in the Columbia Basin but this pest is a new species to the area as far as I know at present.