

Section I.
Surveys of Invasive and Emerging Pests

**Exotic Seed-bugs (Lygoidea: Rhyparochromidae and Oxycarenidae)
New to the Pacific Northwest**

Eric LaGasa
Pest Program / Plant Protection Division
Washington State Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504
360 902-2063
elagasa@agr.wa.gov

Todd Murray
WSU Extension Service / King County
919 SW Grady Way, Suite 201
206 205-3121
Todd.Murray@METROK.COV

In recent years a three introduced European seed-bugs have been discovered in the Pacific Northwest, where they are an increasing nuisance pests in homes. Populations of the seed-bugs invade homes and other buildings seeking over-wintering shelter and homeowner complaints of high numbers of the bugs in the spring and fall have increased steadily from many areas since 2002. Crop and garden problems from the seed-bugs have not been reported, and based on the European literature, they are not expected to become significant agricultural pests in the region.

The most prominent species currently in the Puget Sound area is *Rhyparochromis vulgaris* (Schilling) (Figure 1.). It was first reported in late 2001 by a homeowner in Orting (Pierce Co.), which was the first record for the species in North America. Since 2003, large congregations of the species have been reported in locations from greater Seattle south to rural sites south of Chehalis, in Lewis County.

Figure 1. *Rhyparochromis vulgaris*



A second European seed-bug reported as a household nuisance problem in the region is *Raglius alboacuminatus* Goeze (Figure 2.), which has also been documented as recently established in areas of California and Utah, where it was first recorded in North America in 1999. In 2006, *R. alboacuminatus* aggregations were reported from the Seattle area and locations near Idaho, in Eastern Washington (Rosalia), and Northeastern Oregon (La Grande).

Figure 2. *Raglius alboacuminatus*



A third, much smaller species is *Metapoplax ditomoides* (Costa) (Figure 3.), first reported from North America in Oregon in 1998, it has now been found in many areas of Western Oregon and in California, as far south as Los Angeles county. In the spring of 2006, a homeowner reported large numbers of the species in her home in Lynden, Washington, near the Canadian border.

Figure 3. *Metapoplax ditomoides*



Native to continental Europe, all three species have been intercepted by USDA APHIS PPQ in recent

years, in shipments of various goods from Europe, particularly Italy. A 2004 publication by Dr. Henry (USDA ARS Systematic Entomology Lab), documenting the introduction of the European seed-bug pests into North American, describes the group as a “serious nuisance pests” that “may invade houses and other buildings in large numbers, causing anxiety among homeowners and creating costly control expenses for commercial establishments.” They are all now well established and becoming widespread in our region, and have the potential to become significant “invasive” exotic pests for home and business owners due to their serious nuisance potential.

