

# Bug of the Month

by Jim Revell / October 2016

## Elder Borer | Elderberry Longhorn

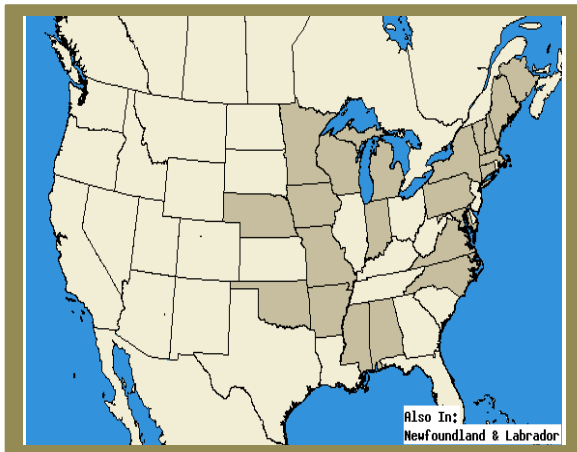
### Elder Borer | Elderberry Longhorn

**Class:** Insecta (Insects)  
**Order:** Coleoptera  
**Family:** Cerambycidae  
(Long-horned Beetles)  
**Genus:** *Desmocerus* (Elderberry Longhorn Beetle)  
**Species:** *palliatatus* (Elderberry Borer)



MG Cindy Morris sent me a great picture (above right) of an Elder Borer / Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. The beetle is 18-26mm or about one-inch long. It is shiny dark-to-metallic blue, and the base or front of the Elytra (pair of harden forewings) is yellow or reddish-yellow. On each Elytron (forewing), there are three ridges, and the middle segments of the antennae have distinct knobby points (or tips). Elder Borers are unmistakable as no other species of beetle carries such vibrant colors or pattern.

The beetle's geographic range is from Ontario south to Kansas and east to Quebec and south to Alabama. Generally, they prefer swampy areas and edges of streams where the host plant grows. They feed on pollen of various flowers, but especially those of the Elderberry shrub (in the Spring, tiny, star-shaped white flowers cover the shrub and, by Summer, give way to shiny, purple-black fruits popular for making elderberry wine, pies and jams). Adult Elder Borers can be found on the flowers, stems and foliage of the Elderberries throughout the Spring and Summer.



As quickly as females of the Elderberry Borer emerge from their underground pupal cell, they begin “calling” for males who come from considerable distances, drawn by her scent; mating, then, takes place immediately. Females lay their eggs on the bark and foliage. After hatching, the larvae bore into the pithy center of branches to feed. As the larvae tunnel, they leave behind waste material resembling wood shavings. Mature larvae, just before pupating, will bore down to the roots at or just below the soil surface. **An interesting note:** This beetle was featured on a U.S. Postage Stamp (see above photo). The Elder Borer / Elderberry Longhorn Beetle is not considered to be a major pest.

**Photo References:** MG Cindy Morris; map: <http://bugguide.net/node/view/14265/data>; Elderberry shrub and berries (Native Fruit Plants / Virginia Berry Farm): <http://www.virginiaberryfarm.com/pages/view/42/>; female on bark: [http://mbugs.blogspot.com/2013\\_12\\_01\\_archive.html](http://mbugs.blogspot.com/2013_12_01_archive.html); stamp: <https://www.whatsthatbug.com/2011/07/13/elderberry-borer-in-canada/>  
**Research References / Resources:** MoBugs and Bugguide.net (both cited above)