

## Shorter Contributions

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THE *OPUNTIA* CACTUS BUG *CHELINIDEA VITTIGER* REDISCOVERED IN VIRGINIA (HETEROPTERA: COREIDAE). — The *Opuntia* Cactus Bug (*Chelinidea vittiger* Uhler) feeds on the Eastern Prickly-pear Cactus (*Opuntia humifusa* (Raf.) Raf.), and ranges from Virginia to Florida, west to Nebraska and the Southwest, and north to southwestern Canada (Herring, 1980). The species is easily recognized by the yellow stripes on the head, the three-sided antennal articles, and its occurrence on prickly pear cacti (Hoffman, 1991). Eastern Prickly-pear Cactus occurs sporadically throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, mostly in dry sandy or rocky, open habitats from coastal dunes to the Appalachian Mountains. Only one species of *Opuntia* is thought to occur in Virginia (Weakley et al., 2012).

Hoffman (1975) stated that “the occurrence of *C. vittiger* in Virginia stands upon very inadequate documentation,” presumably based on two factors. First, is the potential for one of the two Virginia records (specimen cited by Uhler, 1863) to have been taken from the Kanawha River valley in what is now West Virginia, prior to its political separation from Virginia. Second, a nymph taken from Herndon, Virginia in 1911, has never been substantiated via surveys in that area, and may have been mislabeled or misidentified (Hoffman, 1994). Due to the rapid development of suburban areas around Washington, DC (including Herndon) during the last 50 years, the coreid seems less likely to occur there. These factors, and a host of negative surveys by himself and others, led Hoffman (1994) to propose that the species “be removed from the list of Virginia coreids.”

Over the last 15 years, I have searched unsuccessfully at numerous sites containing *Opuntia* cacti in hopes of finding *C. vittiger*. However, my first nocturnal foray for this species (albeit unintentional) yielded a positive result. On 24 August 2010 while trapping bats at a Scott County cave, a lull in the bat trapping led me to make a brief search of the abundant prickly pear cacti in the surrounding pasture. Eventually, I noticed a slight movement on one of the cactus pads, and then another. With the aid of my head lamp, I collected five adults of a dull yellow and black hemipteran (Fig. 1) from a single cluster of *Opuntia*. I never saw them elsewhere in the pasture despite looking at hundreds of cacti. These specimens were examined further, checked against online resources and



Fig. 1. Two adults of the *Opuntia* Cactus Bug (*Chelinidea vittiger*) collected on 24 August 2010 from a site in Scott County, Virginia (photo by C. S. Hobson).

field guides, and were later confirmed by Dr. Hoffman to be *C. vittiger*. Finally, this true bug had been restored to the fauna of the Commonwealth!

It remains to be determined if this species is more nocturnal than diurnal. It might be worthwhile to revisit other sites with *Opuntia* at night to determine if *C. vittiger* can be found more easily with flashlight in hand. Additional surveys are needed to determine the extent and condition of the Scott County population.

The collection site is approximately 2 km (1.2 miles) east of Nickelsville, Scott County, Virginia, and consists of a dry rocky pasture with abundant fescue, thistle, and *Opuntia*. The site has several cave openings and numerous sinkholes. Copper Creek flows along the northern boundary of the site. Voucher specimens are deposited in the Virginia Museum of Natural History, Martinsville, Virginia.

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