

“Long Horn”, “Short Horn”, “No Horn”



I stopped for lunch one day at a little cafe called the Longhorn Bar and Grill and had a hamburger. Really good food! On the wall were three plaques, each one with a set of steer horns attached, and labeled with the titles above. They kind of depicted this month's *Buggy Bits* topic. No, not cows, but beetles, called borers, that invade our trees and wood.

Longhorn beetles are so named because they have veeeery long antennae. In some instances, over twice as long as their bodies. One of the species that is commonly brought into the MG™ Office is the Banded Alder Borer. It is about 1 and 1/4 inches long. The body and the long antennae are banded with light gray (almost white), broad spots. The ground color is black. Or, is it the other way around? Describe a zebra's color!! At any rate, the larvae of these beetles are described as “round-headed” borers, as the feeding tunnel they make in the wood of the alder is round in shape. They normally feed on stressed trees and are usually not a problem. The adults are active and fly around a lot, and therefore, they are brought into the office frequently. People find them on and in their houses and are panicked because of their fairly large size and those long “horns.”

Another longhorn borer is the Fir Sawyer. It is the same size as the Alder Borer, is black with tiny white dots on the body, and feeds on the wood of fir trees as a larva. It looks very much like the Asian Borer that is invading the east coast. If one of these Fir Sawyers is brought into the MG Office, assure people that the Asian beetle is not in the Northwest - *yet!*

In the “short horn” category are the Buprestid beetles. Their antennae are very short for their size. This group includes some of the most beautiful of insects. Buprestids are almost always shiny metallic, with greens, reds, copper and a myriad of other colors. The tropical species can get up to 3” long. Buprestid beetles are sometimes called flat-headed borers,



because the larva carves an oval channel in wood as it feeds. We have several species here in the Northwest. One is a metallic green with iridescent overtones. Another is metallic bronze. Both are about 1 3/8” long and are rather slender. They are also quite pointed at the rear. Economically, flat headed borers can be a problem, as they bore into healthy wood and then leave channels, lessening the value of the wood.

Both the long horns and the short horns can be seen in our insect collection in the Coleoptera (beetle) drawer. By the way, I don't know of any “no horn” beetles.