

Colorado Insect of Interest

Eyed Elators

Scientific Name: *Alaus oculatus* (Linneaus) (eyed click beetle), *Alaus lusciosus* (Hope), *Alaus melanops* LeConte

Order: Coleoptera (Beetles)

Family: Elateridae (Click Beetles)

Identification and Descriptive Features:

The eyed elators are fairly large beetles, 2.5-3.5 cm in length, with an elongate body form. Prominent eyespot markings on the large prothorax behind the head lend the name “eyed” to these insects, which are generally dark gray-black. Light markings occur with the *Alaus oculatus* and *A. lusciosus*; *Alaus melanops* is generally slate gray.

The eyed elators are the largest click beetles found in North America. Similar to most other species of this large insect family they are capable of flipping when placed on their back, sometimes with an audible clicking noise.

Distribution in Colorado: All records of *Alaus* spp. in Colorado are from east of the Continental Divide, from forested areas and eastern grasslands. The most frequently encountered species, *Alaus oculatus*, is most commonly encountered in the Arkansas Valley. However, none of the eyed elators are not common anywhere in Colorado and, despite their large size, are rarely collected.

Life History and Habits: Larvae of the eyed elators develop as predators of wood boring insects found in dead and rotting wood, notably roundheaded borers. The immature eyed elators are generally wormlike in body form, with functional legs. The general body color is brown and the end segments of the body are somewhat darker on *Alaus oculatus*. (Larvae of all click beetles are known as “wireworms”.)

Adults likely feed on some nectar, but do not appear to feed on solid foods. They can fly and are attracted to lights.



Figures 1. The eyed click beetle, *Alaus oculatus*, from Rocky Ford, CO.



Figure 2. The three *Alaus* species that can be found in eastern Colorado, left-right: *Alaus oculata*, *Alaus melanops*, *Alaus lusciosus*.