

## Colorado Insect of Interest

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# Pleasing Fungus Beetle

**Scientific Name:** *Gibbifer californicus*  
(Lacordaire)

**Order:** Coleoptera (Beetles)

**Family:** Erotylidae (Pleasing Fungus Beetles)



**Figure 1.** Pleasing fungus beetle, *Gibbifer californicus*.

**Identification and Descriptive Features:** The adult of the pleasing fungus beetle species common in Colorado, *Gibbifer californicus*, is a very distinctive insect. It is a fairly large beetle, about 2.5-3 cm, with a generally overall body form.



**Figure 2.** Pleasing fungus beetle visting fungi on pine log. Photograph by Matt Camper.

The head is dark colored but the wing covers are colorful - usually a shade of blue or purple. Dark indented spots mark the wing covers and a rectangular black marking occurs along the outside edge. Upon death coloration of these beetles will normally fade considerably.

**Distribution in Colorado:** Widely distributed in forested areas of the state supporting pine and aspen.

**Life History and Habits:** The pleasing fungus beetle develops on soft conk fungi on aspen, ponderosa pine and other logs in forested areas. The biology of the insect is largely unknown; some apparently spend the winter in the adult stage laying eggs in spring; others survive as larvae within the fungus.



**Figure 3.** Larva of a pleasing fungus beetle.

The larvae feed on the fungus during late spring and early summer, consuming large quantities. When full-grown the larvae hang from the underside of the logs and transform to a pupa, often in groups of several dozen. With this habit, a grouping of pupae may appear somewhat like a

miniature bat roost. After about a couple of weeks the adults emerge and remain active through the end of summer and into early fall. There is one generation produced per year.

**Related Species:** Two much smaller species of pleasing fungus beetles are known from Colorado, *Triplax mesosternalis* Schaeffer and *T. antica* LeConte. These beetles may be found under loose bark or within fungal growths on rotting trees.



**Figure 4.** *Triplax mesosternalis*, a small species of pleasing fungus beetle that is uncommonly collected in Colorado.