

Colorado Insect of Interest

Southwestern Stag Beetle

Scientific Name: *Lucanus*
(=*Pseudolucanus*) *mazama* (LeConte)

Order: Coleoptera (Beetles)
Family: Lucanidae (Stag Beetles)



Figure 1. Male southwestern stag beetle found near the Sand Dunes National Monument.

Identification and Descriptive Features: The southwestern stag beetle is a large beetle, ranging from 25-35 mm in length. They are dark reddish brown to nearly black and possess prominent mandibles that project forward. The sexes are easily distinguishable, with substantially larger mandibles produced in the male. Larvae are pale-colored, C-shaped “white grubs” found in rotting wood.



Figure 2. Female (left) and male (right) southwestern stag beetle.

Distribution in Colorado: The western stag beetle is found in forested areas of western and southwestern Colorado. County records include Mesa, Delta, Montrose, Archuleta, LaPlata, Montezuma, Saguache, Alamosa, and Fremont.

Life History and Habits: Little is known about the life history of this species. Adults are generally found from mid-July through mid-August and may be attracted to lights. The larvae develop in rotting wood.

Related Species: Other, smaller species of stag beetles found in Colorado occur in the genus *Platycerus*. *Platycerus depressus* LeConte is known from Gunnison County and *P. piceous* Kirby from Larimer County. Larvae of these likely develop in rotting stumps of softwood trees.

A well-known stag beetle found in the eastern United



Figure 3. *Platycerus* sp. stag beetle.

States is the giant stag beetle, *Lucanus elaphus* Fabricius. Males have greatly enlarged jaws that may be as long the rest of the body and larvae develop in oak stumps. This species ranges west into Oklahoma and Nebraska but does not occur in Colorado.