REDISCOVERY OF LIGYROCORIS SLOSSONI (HEMIPTERA: LYGAEOIDEA: RHYPAROCHROMIDAE), A RARELY COLLECTED SEED BUG CONSIDERED PRECINCTIVE IN FLORIDA

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Since its original description nearly 90 years ago, Ligyrocoris slossoni Barber has remained a rarely collected lygaeoid bug whose habits are unknown. Only the unique holotype and three additional specimens have been recorded (Sweet 1986; Slater & Baranowski 1990), and information on its habitat is limited to Blatchley’s (1926) comment that he collected a female at Dunedin, Florida, “by beating dead leaves of oak near the bay beach.”

Barber (1914) described L. slossoni from a male taken at Lake Worth, Florida, but in his revision of Ligyrocoris, he omitted slossoni from his keys, noting that his description of this now “doubtful species” had been based on a damaged and apparently teneral specimen (Barber 1921). When a fully sclerotized specimen became available for study (the female from Dunedin), Barber (1924) was able to reinstate L. slossoni as a valid species and to redescribe it.

Barber subsequently identified this seed bug from other southeastern states and from as far north as southern Illinois (Sweet 1986). In a list of the Lygaeidae of Iowa and Illinois, Slater (1952) recorded it from Washington County, Illinois, based on Barber’s determination. Sweet (1986), however, found that material identified as L. slossoni actually represented two species, with nearly all specimens proving to be an undescribed species that he named L. barberi. Sweet (1986) also reported two additional specimens of true L. slossoni; both were from Alachua County, Florida, with one labeled as taken at Gainesville.

The Illinois record of L. slossoni (Slater 1952), although retained (as L. slossonae; see discussion of nomenclature below) in the most recent catalog of North American lygaeoids (Ashlock & A. Slater 1988), evidently is based on a misidentification. Sweet’s (1986) type series of L. barberi included a specimen from Dubois [Washington Co.], Illinois, which likely is the one on which the Illinois record of L. slossoni had been based.

Both L. barberi and L. slossoni have a transverse dark fascia on the corium (Sweet 1986). Ligyrocoris slossoni can be distinguished by the characters given by Sweet (1986) in his key to eastern species of the genus and by his illustrations of the head, pronotum, hemelytra, abdomen, and fore femur. Characters that facilitate recognition of L. slossoni include the head unicolorous dark red (dark brown in L. barberi), pronotum with only a few scattered hairs (densely hairy in L. barberi), pronotal collar with distinct groove (collar not set off by distinct groove in L. barberi), metapleuron shiny (pruinose in L. barberi), femora and tibiae reddish and contrasting with the yellow tarsi (legs pale yellow, except distal 2/3 of femora light reddish brown, in L. barberi), and fore femur with one major spine (two in L. barberi) (Sweet 1986).

On the basis of recent field work in Florida, I here provide additional records of this rarely collected rhyparochromid (see Henry [1997] for current classification of lygaeoid families) and notes on its habits and the habitats in which it was taken. Voucher specimens have been deposited in the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

In his original description of L. slossoni, Barber (1914) stated that the holotype was from the collection of Mrs. Annie T. Slosson, implying (but not explicitly stating) that he was naming the species for her. Assuming that Barber intended to dedicate the species to her, his latinization was incorrect. Barber’s name, however, cannot be considered an incorrect original spelling, and the emendation L. slossonae (Ashlock & A. Slater 1988) should be regarded as an incorrect subsequent spelling under Article 32.5 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature 1999). It might be argued that the use of L. slossonae by Slater and Baranowski (1990), the only literature reference to this species subsequent to Ashlock and A. Slater’s (1988) emendation, represents prevailing usage under Article 33.3.1 of the Code. Because of Article 32.5 of the Code and lack of an explicit statement by Barber (1914) regarding use of the name slossoni, I am retaining Barber’s original spelling.

Material examined (all collections by the author; roman numerals = nymphal instars): FLORIDA: Hamilton Co., jct. Rt. 129 & SW 79 Terrace, 0.3 km N of Suwannee River, 2 km NE of Suwannee, 30°23.8’N, 82°56.0’W, 1 V, ex crown of Andropogon tenuispathexus (Nash) Nash (Poaceae), 27 May 2000; Lake Co., Rt. 27, 8.5 km S of jct. Rt. 50, SSE of Clermont, 28°28.7’N, 81°43.0’W, 1 V, ex crown of Andropogon tenuispathexus (Schrad.) Nees (Poaceae), and 4 ⅓, 1 ⅞, 1 V, ex basal rosettes of Heterotheca subaxillaris (Lamarck) Britton & Rusby = H. latifolia Buckl. (Asteraceae), 20-22 Mar. 2002; 2 V, ex crowns of E. curvula, 3 Nov. 2002; 2 ⅓, 1 ⅞, 2 III, 4 IV, 3 V, ex crowns of E. curvula, 21 Nov. 2002.