

THE WATER HYACINTH MIRID

(*Eccritotarsus catarinensis*)

A natural enemy of **WATER**

HYACINTH (*Eichhornia crassipes*)

in South Africa

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DESCRIPTION

The adult mirids are slender and about 3 mm long. They are black, with pale legs and reddish eyes. They are very active and are easily disturbed. They are often found aggregating on the undersurface of leaves.

LIFE CYCLE

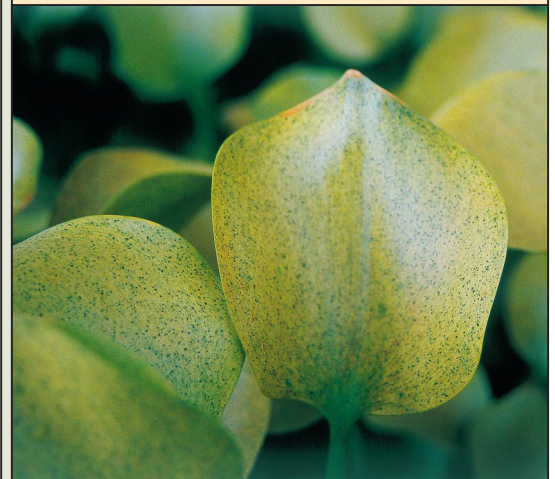
The creamy white eggs are laid in the water hyacinth leaf tissue, mainly on the undersurface of the leaves. Nymphal development is about 15 days. The nymphs are whitish/nearly transparent, small and with red eyes. They are normally found in groups, on the undersurface of the leaf. The adults are fairly long lived (50 days).

FEEDING DAMAGE AND IMPACT

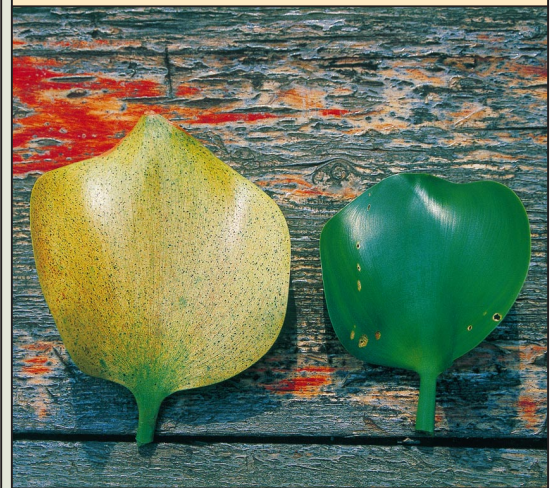
The feeding causes yellowing/browning of the leaf due to the extraction of chlorophyll. The mirid's presence is associated with small black frass marks on the leaf surface. The feeding reduces the vigour of the water hyacinth plants. The mirids prefer mature stands of water hyacinth where the canopy of leaves offers them protection from excessive cold and heat. Although being a tropical insect the mirid has established in the cooler areas of the country where it over-winters on water hyacinth protected from frost by a canopy of trees.



Adult water hyacinth mirid



Water hyacinth leaf damage by mirid



Comparison of water hyacinth leaves: damaged (left) and undamaged (right)



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