

# Sri Lankan Weevil

## Summary

The Sri Lankan Weevil (SLW), also known as the grey Asian weevil, is a voracious beetle native to the Southeast Asian country Sri Lanka and has spread around the globe. In late 2000, SLW was identified for the first time in the United States, in Broward County, Florida. Since then it has spread to twenty-six other counties including Collier and Lee (Neal, 2013). In Florida, the SLW finds the ideal subtropical climate.

## Symptoms

Plants affected by the SLW show foliage damage. The most notable symptoms are notches that are cut into the leaf margin when feeding (Fig. 1). New leaf foliage is especially at risk to these pests as it is what they primarily target when feeding (Mitchell, 2003). Roots of the host plants are also affected by the pest during the larval stage. The damage done to the roots has not yet been researched but it is thought to have little to no effect on the health of the plant (Mitchell, 2003).



Fig. 1: Leaf margin notches on Lychee observed at the Food Forest. Photo: Diana Schultz



Fig. 2: Adult specimen of SLW, feeding on lychee leaf. Details of adult weevil and damage. Photo: Diana Schultz

## Causal agent

*Myllocerus undecimpustulatus undatus* Marshall, the SLW (Fig. 2), looks almost identical to the Florida native leaf notcher (*Artipus floridanus*). Major differences between the two occur on the hind legs and head (Fig. 3 and 4). On the hind legs of the SLW there are spines; the spines are absent in the little leaf notcher hind legs (Fig. 3). The head of the Sri Lankan Weevil has a yellowish hue (Fig. 4).

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Fig 3: Details of the hind leg of a SLW specimen collected at the FGCU Food Forest. Photo: Diana Schultz.



Fig 4: Characteristic yellow head of the SLW (same specimen as in Fig. 3). Photo: Diana Schultz.

The Sri Lankan weevil's head has a yellow hue, also absent in the native leaf notcher (Fig. 4).

The typical life cycle of the SLW includes eggs that hatch within 3-5 days, a 1-2 month larval stage in the soil where the primary source of nutrients is the host plant's roots, one week pupal stage in debris, and an adult (Fig. 2) with a life span that can last anywhere from 10-150 days (Crane, 2008).

## Hosts

Many species are available in South Florida to host the SLW.

Common local fruit bearing hosts include: Avocado, citrus, peach, lychee, papaya, passion fruit, carambola and mango.

Common local Ornamental hosts include: Areca palm, crepe myrtle, orchid tree, bottlebrush, coco plum, live oak, sea grape, and pigmy date palm (Crane, 2008).

The SLW also affects vegetables: pepper and eggplant (Neal, 2013)

## Control

Unfortunately, at the moment there are no biological or commercially available treatments for controlling specifically *Myloccerus u. undatus* populations.

Currently, the only suggested method of control of adults is to shake the pests off the tree and dispose them into soapy water. Mixing of the soil (disking) and clearing of debris helps breaking the biological cycle.

No natural enemies of the weevil have been identified yet (Hunsberger, 2003).

## References

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