

FIRST RECORD OF *OCHYROMERA LIGUSTRI* (COLEOPTERA:  
CURCULIONIDAE) FROM CHINESE PRIVET IN FLORIDA

J.P. CUDA<sup>1</sup> AND M.C. ZELLER<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Entomology and Nematology Department, University of Florida, P.O. Box 110620,  
Gainesville, Florida 32611-0620

<sup>2</sup>Bureau of Aquatic Plant Management, Florida Department of Environmental  
Protection, 3917 Commonwealth Boulevard, M.S. 710  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Chinese privet or hedge privet, *Ligustrum sinense* (Lour.) (Oleaceae), an ornamental plant of Asian origin, has become naturalized throughout north Florida, Alabama,

and Georgia (Godfrey 1988) as well as Mississippi (Goddard 1992) and Tennessee (Faulkner et al. 1989). This shrub is frequently used as a hedge or border plant (Whitcomb 1975) and its variegated form added color and design to Florida landscapes (Watkins & Sheehan 1975). Chinese privet is now considered an invasive weed because it has escaped cultivation. Songbirds and bobwhite quail are primarily responsible for spreading the plant by ingesting the fruits and dispersing the seeds (MacRae 1980). In some areas, Chinese privet forms dense thickets which displace more desirable native vegetation (Faulkner et al. 1989). According to Goddard (1992), dense stands of this weedy shrub also may harbor populations of the hard tick *Ixodes scapularis* Say, a suspected vector of Lyme disease in the southern United States (Oliver 1989). The Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council currently lists Chinese privet as a Category I invasive species because it causes severe ecological damage by disrupting native plant communities (EPPC 1997). Since no practical control measures exist for large infestations of Chinese privet in natural areas (Faulkner et al. 1989), this weedy shrub may be a suitable candidate for biological control (Pemberton 1996).

A sample of several hundred seeds was collected (by MCZ) from Chinese privet in Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida, on 2 July 1997 for germination studies. After careful inspection, some seeds were found to contain insect larvae. To determine the identity of the insect, several larvae and a subsample of 120 seeds were transferred to Gainesville for rearing. Sixty seeds were placed individually into 1 oz. (29.6 ml) clear plastic cups and capped with lids with air holes to obtain adults for identification. The remaining seeds were arranged on moist sand (2 cm depth) in a 1 pint (0.55 l) plastic container with holes in the lid for air exchange. The rearing containers were held in a laboratory at 27°C and a 18L:6D photoperiod. No adults or parasitoids emerged from the seeds held individually but six weevils emerged from the pooled seed sample on 11 July 1997. The weevils were identified (by M.C. Thomas, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry) as *Ochyromera ligustri* Warner, and the larvae and adults were deposited in the Florida State Collection of Arthropods, Gainesville. On 7 August 1997, the remaining seed stock from Tallahassee was dissected and inspected for the presence of *O. ligustri*. Weevil larvae were found in 89 of the 358 seeds examined, or 24.9%.

*Ochyromera ligustri* was first discovered in 1959 attacking Japanese privet, *L. japonicum* Thunb., in North Carolina (Wray 1961, Warner 1961). According to Warner (1961), *O. ligustri* was probably brought into the United States from the Orient in nursery stock. Japanese privet is the preferred host plant of the weevil although *O. ligustri* also will attack glossy privet or wax-leaf ligustrum, *L. lucidum* Ait., amur or common privet, *L. amurense* Carr., and possibly lilac, *Syringa* spp. (Warner 1961, Wray 1961). Since its introduction, *O. ligustri* has been reported from Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Virginia (O'Brien & Wibmer 1982, Johnson & Lyon 1988). Notes on the biology and life history of *O. ligustri* were first reported by Wray (1961) and are summarized by Johnson and Lyon (1988).

Surveys of the arthropods associated with Chinese privet in Florida during the mid 1970's, although not extensive, suggested this plant was not attacked by *O. ligustri* (Poe et al. 1978). Since the weevil has been collected from Chinese privet in the vicinity of Tallahassee in recent years, this paper represents the first published report of Chinese privet as a host plant. Further studies will be required to determine what role seed predation by *O. ligustri* may play in reducing the invasiveness of Chinese privet in Florida.

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## SUMMARY

The discovery of *Ochyromera ligustri* on Chinese privet, *Ligustrum sinense*, in Florida is a new host record.

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