



Acalolepta aesthetica (Olliff), “Queensland longhorn beetle” (Coleoptera: Cerambycidae)

BACKGROUND

A single longhorned beetle was found resting on a screen door of a Hawaiian Acres (Puna, Hawai‘i) resident in July 2009. This unusually large cerambycid beetle was identified by Dr. G.A. Samuelson (Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum) and A. Tishechkin [United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS), Systematic Entomology Laboratory] as *Acalolepta aesthetica* (Olliff), a species endemic to Australia and a new state record for Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) staff surveyed for additional specimens and infestations in the surrounding area. No other individuals were recovered until 2013 when several adult beetles were collected by residents in the Hawaiian Acres and Orchidland subdivisions of lower Puna. In 2014, the first host plant association for *A. aesthetica* in Hawai‘i was documented when a declining breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*) tree was cut down and a cerambycid larva was found tunneling into the rotting trunk base. The larva was reared to an adult and confirmed as *A. aesthetica*. In the following years, increasing numbers of adults have been collected around Puna. Additional host trees continue to be identified. While we use the term “Queensland longhorn beetle”, this is not an official, approved, or recognized common name for this species. We use it here for simplified communication with the public.

DESCRIPTION

A. aesthetica is one of the largest cerambycid longhorned beetles in Hawai‘i, reaching lengths of around 4.5 cm (Fig. 1; 1.8 in) from the front of its head to the tip of its elytra, and the smallest individual collected being 2 cm (.8 in). As with other wood boring beetles, the size and quality of the host material may determine its maximum adult size. The base color of *A. aesthetica* is dark brown and covered by slightly lighter in color, dense pubescence, giving it a velvet-like finish. Below the pubescence, covered with dense punctations (Fig. 3). The pronotum has two sharp spines (Fig. 2) and its antennae extend beyond the length of its body (male antennae can be twice as long as its body, female antennae are shorter). Larvae (Fig. 8) are legless, cream-colored, and can reach lengths of over 5.75 cm (2.23 in). There are many other longhorned beetles which may be mistaken for adult *A. aesthetica*.

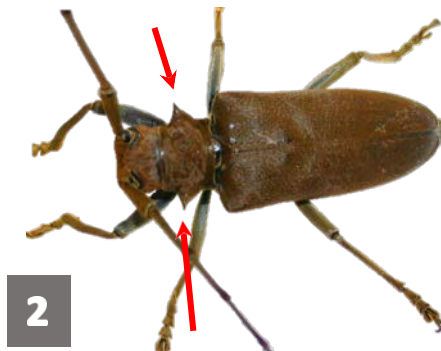


Figure 2. Arrows showing the two sharp spines on the sides of the pronotum.

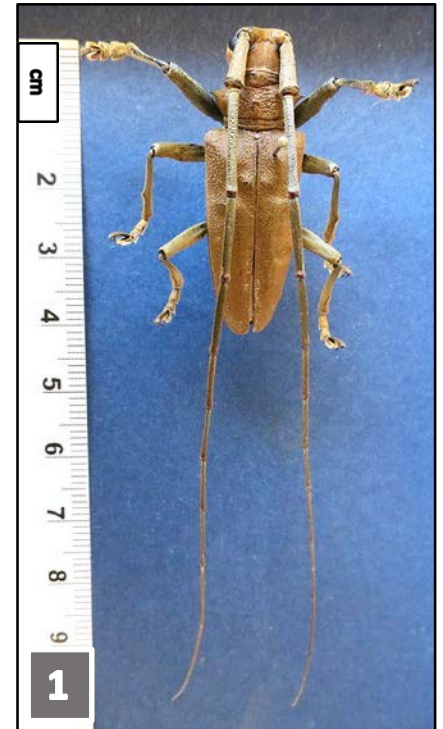


Figure 1. Adult male *Acalolepta aesthetica*.

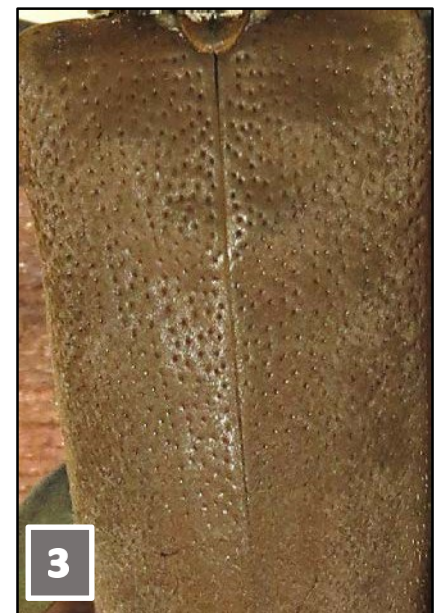


Figure 3. Punctations on the elytra and velvet-like pubescence.

Acalolepta aesthetica (Olliff)

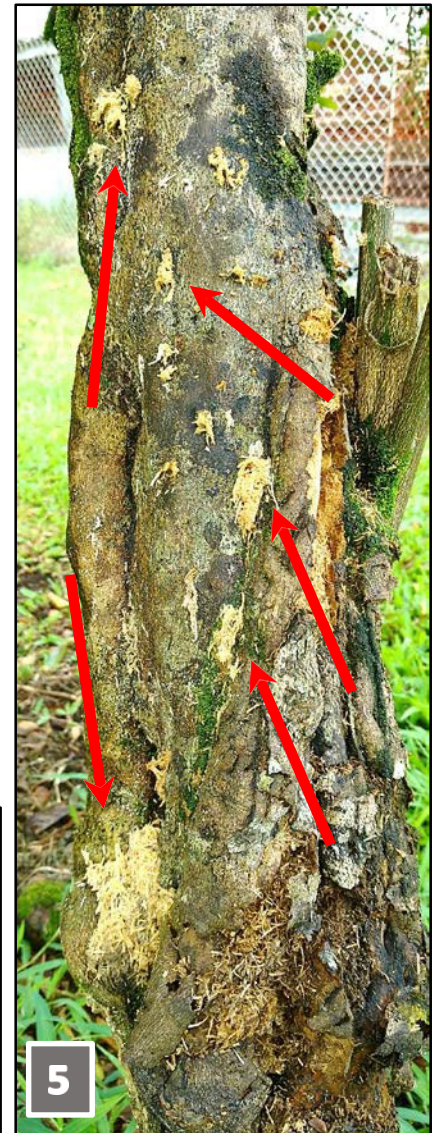
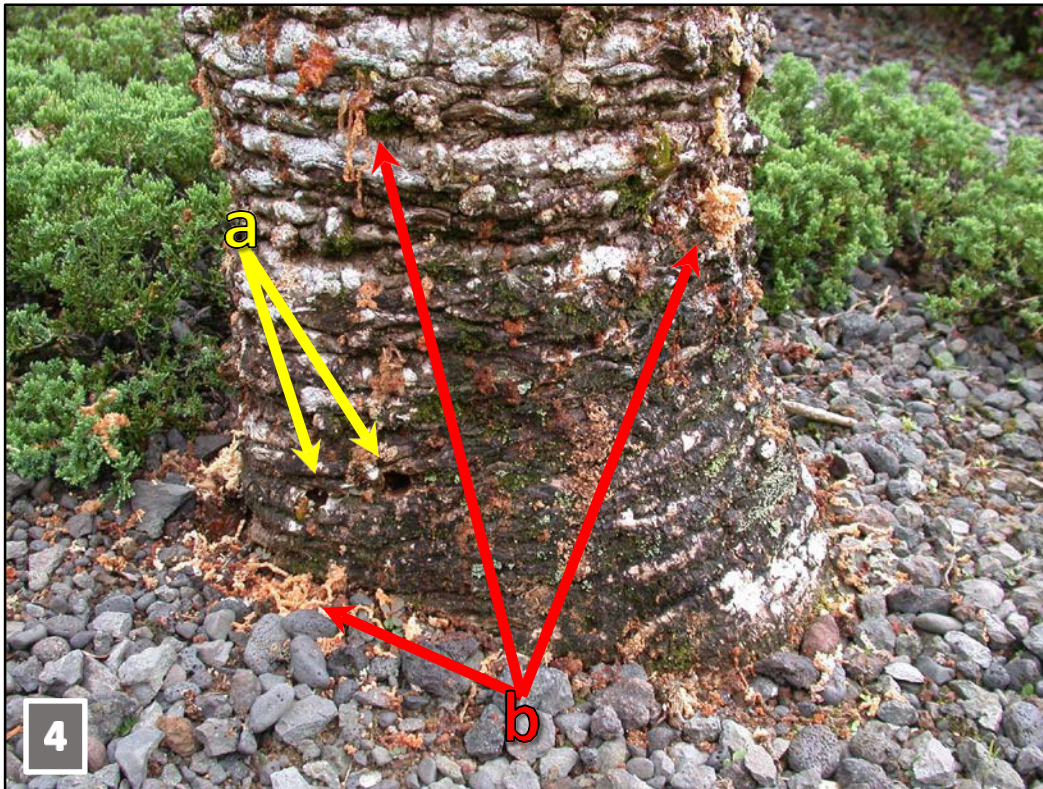


Figure 4. Trunk of queen sago showing (a) adult emergence holes and (b) frass pushed out by feeding larvae.

Figure 5. Trunk of citrus showing frass being pushed out by feeding larvae.

Figure 6. Kukui branch opened up to expose adult *A. aesthetica* undergoing sclerotization in gallery and showing frass packed behind it.

Figure 7. *A. aesthetica* pupa.

Figure 8. Late instar larva extracted from queen sago.

Figure 9. Cross section of Tahiti lime trunk showing galleries.

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Figure 10. *Aegolipton reflexa*.
Photo: Karl Magnacca.



Figure 11. Exit hole after adult emergence.



Figure 12. Girdling on trunk of kukui by feeding larvae.

DESCRIPTION CONTINUED

The largest cerambycid species in Hawai'i, *Aegolipton reflexa* (Fig. 10), is endemic to Hawai'i and its larvae bore into dead trees such as *Acacia koa* and *Metrosideros polymorpha*. *A. reflexa* is about 5 cm (2 in) and has raised ridges on its elytra versus dense punctations.

Other lookalike longhorned beetles are much smaller in size than *A. aesthetica* or will be different in coloration. Many have patterns such as lines and spots, which *A. aesthetica* lacks.

DAMAGE

Adult feeding habits remain unknown although they likely feed on leaves, petioles or bark of plants, without causing significant damage. Damage to trees is caused by the larvae which feed and tunnel within the woody portion of the host, compromising the structural integrity of the branches and trunk. Larval feeding creates entry points for pathogens, making the host plant more susceptible to secondary disease infections and attack by additional wood boring pests, further compromising host plant health. Heavy infestation of already weakened trees may lead to plant death. Because cerambycid larvae are wood borers which feed within dead or dying trees, infestation by other species of longhorned beetles may be mistakenly attributed to *A. aesthetica*.

Key symptoms of *Acalolepta aesthetica* infestation:

- Sawdust-like frass being pushed out of holes of trunk (Figs. 4 & 5)
- Round exit holes about 1.25 cm (.5 in) (Fig. 11)
- Girdling on trunk (Fig. 12)
- Sap oozing at oviposition sites (Fig. 13)
- Branch dieback and dropping

HOSTS

Verified true hosts in Hawai'i include breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*), kukui (*Aleurites moluccanus*), queen sago (*Cycas circinalis*), *Citrus* spp., cacao (*Theobroma cacao*), mulberry (*Morus alba*), trumpet tree (*Cecropia obtusifolia*), Norfolk pine cut logs (*Araucaria heterophylla*), avocado (*Persea americana*), kalamungay (*Moringa oleifera*), gunpowder tree (*Trema orientalis*), hibiscus (*Hibiscus* spp.), croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*), and elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*). Probable hosts which either exhibited symptoms of larval infestation or adult emergence and need to be confirmed by rearing larvae to adulthood include durian (*Durio* sp.), tree spinach/chaya (*Cnidoscolus aconitifolius*), passion fruit (*Passiflora edulis* var. *flavicarpa*), and various cycads.



Figure 13. Sap oozing from entrance point in trunk of kukui.

Acalolepta aesthetica (Olliff)

DISTRIBUTION

- Native to Australia: Queensland
- In Hawai'i: Hawai'i Island- Lower Puna District, south through Mountain View ["**HOT ZONE**"]; Hilo, north up the Hamakua Coast through Honoka'a and Āhualoa.

CONTROL, MANAGEMENT, PREVENTION

There are no specific control or management techniques developed for *A. aesthetica* as it is not considered a pest in its native range of Australia. There are no effective insecticides to control infestation by boring larvae in trees which are protected by layers of plant tissue, deep in galleries and tunnels. Total host removal of infested host trees with subsequent chipping in place is recommended. A host tree is considered infested when there is any sign of *A. aesthetica* larval feeding activity or damage. Host removal is the only effective method to ensure elimination of immature life stages, preventing potential adult beetle dispersal.

Human-assisted movement of *A. aesthetica* through infested material and hitchhiking adults can greatly enhance the rate of spread to uninfested areas. To prevent the further spread of *A. aesthetica*, it is important that known hosts originating from infested areas be inspected carefully for signs of infestation. Do not move cut wood product, logs, or branches of hosts from infested areas. Infested trees or plant parts should be destroyed **in place** and not relocated to uninfested areas such as neighbor islands or other communities on Hawai'i Island.

IF YOU FIND AN ADULT BEETLE OUTSIDE OF THE LOWER PUNA/HILO "HOT ZONE":

Collect the beetle and contain it in a secure container. Take clear digital photos of the beetle and record the location, date, person who collected the beetle, and describe how you found the beetle (e.g., on a specific type of plant/tree, on your screen door at night, etc.).

Email the photos and the information to: HDOA.PPC@HAWAII.GOV or report it to 643pest.org.

IF YOU SUSPECT DAMAGE TO HOST PLANTS BY LARVAL FEEDING OUTSIDE OF THE LOWER PUNA/HILO "HOT ZONE":

Take many clear digital photos of the damage. Use an object (coin or ruler) next to any emergence holes for a size reference. Record the location of the infestation, species of host plant, date observed, and what infestation symptoms you saw.

Email the photos and the information to: HDOA.PPC@HAWAII.GOV or report it to 643pest.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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