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Virginia Record for an Introduced Palearctic Stilt Bug, *Berytinus minor* (Heteroptera: Berytidae)

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During the six-week trapping interval of 31 March – 11 May, 1992, a drift fence unit operated by VMNH obtained the first known Virginia specimen of the stilt bug *Berytinus minor* (Herrich-Schäffer). This installation was located at 1190 m ASL on "The Priest", 6.4 km south-east of Montebello in western Nelson County.

Berytinus minor is a common and widespread insect in much of western Europe. The history of its establishment and subsequent spread in North America has been carefully chronicled by A. G. Wheeler (1970, 1979), who suspected that the bug was brought to this continent by passive transport in plant material. The earliest documented specimen was taken in Ontario in 1929, and after a lag period of two decades the species was being

found at many places in New York, New England, and eastern Canada. Wheeler (1970) provided a spot map of the capture sites known to him, indicating southward spread into northern parts of Ohio and New Jersey. Evidence at the time suggested that dispersal was being accomplished by both "natural" and anthropochoric means.

In his supplementary note about this species, Wheeler (1979) recorded his capture of specimens at the Cranberry Glades, Pocahontas Co., West Virginia, extending the known range some 320 km further southward. This region is well-known as a disjunct postglacial refugium for many kinds of plants and animals, so the discovery of *minor* there might suggest natural occurrence except

that Wheeler himself captured the material by beating *Picea glauca*, an exotic ornamental evergreen planted in landscaping around the Visitor Center. For this reason he inclined to the commercial transport of plant materials as the more likely explanation for the burgeoning area colonized by *B. minor* in a relatively short time.

The discovery of the species on "The Priest" extends the range of *minor* only a rather inconsequential 110 km (70 miles) east-southeast of the Cranberry Glades. Although the addition of another component to the known fauna of a region is of some intrinsic interest, the most notable feature about the capture site on "The Priest" is its essentially undisturbed facies. It would be difficult to imagine anyplace in Virginia more removed from the influence of agrarian or horticultural activities. Although the bug's host plant, *Trifolium repens*, occurs everywhere in Virginia, the nearest farms or even summer homes are separated from the pitfall site by five or six km of continuous deciduous forest and about 300 m of vertical relief. In this case the possibility of chance introduction by human activities seems implausible. Until more is learned about the presence of *Berytinus minor* in Virginia, speculation about the source of the "Priest" population seems futile.

Berytinus is easily distinguished from the other two local genera of the family (*Neides* and *Jalysus*) by the apically clavate 1st antennomere and the short hind legs,

the femora of which do not extend back to abdominal apex. Local entomologists might profitably capitalize on Dr. Wheeler's findings in New York, and search for this recent immigrant into Virginia on and under white clover. Dispersal seems most pronounced in April in New York; our milder and shorter winters might suggest even earlier movements in Virginia.

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